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THE COUNTY.

CHAPTER I.

ESMÉ AND FRANCES.

‘AND the four oval beds at the corners shall be African marigold, bordered with lobelia,’ I continue, waving my walking-stick indicatively at the four points of the horizon and turning an unheeding ear to Mackenzie’s murmured remonstrance, ‘*Tagetes signata pumila*.’ ‘Don’t you think that will be pretty, Frances?’

‘If this yellow weed is African marigold, you will certainly have a dash of colour in the landscape,’ returns Frances carelessly, giving up an unsuccessful attempt to drop a pebble on to the back of a bloated gold-fish, who, in the greedy hope of more toothsome missiles, does not budge from his watery station, even at risk of dislocation of the spine.

Frances takes no interest in the bedding out. She hates all things rural. The highest pitch of enthusiasm for our mighty mother Nature to which she has ever been known to attain was reached one fine May day last season, when Hyde Park was gay with tulips and hyacinths and redolent of lilac and hawthorn. Upon that occasion she did indeed relax so far as to remark that it made a pretty background for summer frocks; but in strict justice to her consistency it must be admitted that even this mild praise of a humanly diluted landscape was called forth by the desire to captivate a bucolic young peer, who was squiring her up the Row.

‘And will you have the triangular beds done with the Reverend Atkinson as usual, ma’am?’ asks Mackenzie, note-book in hand,

his hard Scotch features demonstrating grim disapproval of Frances' light treatment of the horticultural event of the year.

'Yes, I think so, Mackenzie—yes,' I reply, with an elaborate assumption of careful consideration which is weakly intended to conceal the fact that I have clean forgotten what flower of the field or garden rejoices in that clerical designation—for I am not a whit more interested in gardening than Frances, and am only borne up in my interview with Mackenzie by a stronger sense of duty.

'The Reverend Atkinson!' says Frances, with an amused giggle, as she stoops down on the turf at the edge of the pond and washes from her slim white fingers all trace of her pebbly warfare with the disappointed gold-fish. 'What a ridiculous name for a flower! And pray what is he like—this reverend gentleman?'

I turn aside with a dubious cough and a semi-wink at Frances; the occasion seems to me a good one for correcting Uncle Frank's Dandie Dinmont, who is burrowing a deep hole in the tapestry border close by.

Mackenzie coughs also; but his is the assured clearing of the throat of one about to impart valuable information.

'The Reverend Atkinson is just one of the finest varieties of the ordinary scarlet geranium. The trusses are large, the blooms are firm and well-coloured, the foliage is healthy——'

'It is sure to be if you have the management of it, Mackenzie,' says Frances, smiling up in his rugged face with her clear blue eyes. 'I defy any foliage to be unhealthy if it lives within a mile of you.'

She puts her hand through my arm as she speaks, and gives me a sharp tweak to hurry my movements. She is bored to death with Mackenzie and his bedding-out, and has no intention of waiting, or letting me wait, to be harangued any longer. But Frances would not be Frances if she parted from any male creature with an expression of disapproval on his manly countenance, though that countenance be only old Mackenzie's weather-beaten visage; so she gazes sweetly at him while she navigates me firmly forwards, using my elbow as a helm.

'Miss Esmé mustn't stand about any longer now, as she has just walked home from Brackham; but we will look out over the beds from the morning-room window. It is easier to decide from a bird's-eye view; and then we can come out to-morrow morning

and let you know what we should like—though, for the matter of that, Mackenzie, anything you arrange is sure to be pretty.’

And so she covers our lazy retreat, leaving old Mackenzie completely mollified, and under the impression that our dreams to-night will be of the bedding-out.

Frances’ flower-like face is so innocent, her eyes are so clear, the colour in her delicately rounded cheek comes and goes with such a lovely transparent flutter, her whole expression is so ‘childlike and bland,’ that no man born of woman can willingly suspect her candour.

‘It’s no use blinking the fact any longer, Esmé,’ she is saying five minutes later, as we pace along the smooth walks, past the oval pond where the gold-fish are disporting themselves, and up the low, wide stone steps leading from the Dutch garden to the broad gravel terrace in front of the house. ‘There’s no doubt about it—something is up’—with a slight pause to give effect to her oracular utterance.

‘Why do you say that?’ I ask. ‘Has anything happened since I went into Brackham?’

‘N—no,’ says my sister slowly, picking a carnation and nibbling the stalk with her short white teeth; ‘at least, nothing much. I overheard Uncle Frank talking to someone on the grand staircase just now; but I didn’t pay any attention until it struck me that the voice answering him was a strange one, and then I listened. Uncle Frank was saying, “No, no, it is quite unnecessary to consult the young ladies; I wish it to be a surprise for them.” Then the man he was talking to went off by the back staircase, and Uncle Frank came sauntering into the billiard-room. He turned very red when he saw me, and said, “Hullo! I thought you had gone to Brackham with Esmé.”’

‘Well? Did you tell him that he had better make a clean breast of it, as you had eavesdropped enough to know he was up to something?’

‘Not I,’ returns Frances, with a sage wag of her head. ‘Our revered relative isn’t to be caught like that. If he doesn’t want us to find out, it would have been so much wasted breath and lost dignity.’

‘Yes, that’s true,’ I assent. ‘He’s not a bad old thing in some ways—but he’s sly, very sly.’

‘If he is preparing some touching little gift,’ continues Frances pensively, ‘I, for my part, could well dispense with the

surprise. If, for instance, he is going to do up the morning-room for us, how much more interesting it would be to have a finger in the pie and choose the decoration ourselves !'

'You may make your mind easy about that,' I remark literally, 'seeing that he couldn't very well have the morning-room done up one day while we were out walking.'

'What I am objecting to,' retorts my sister, 'is the principle of the thing. If there is any money to be spent upon me, let me have the spending of it. That's what I mean. When I am married I am determined to have a clear understanding about that. The first time he—Dick, Tom, or Harry, whatever his name may be—shows a proper sense of his privileges in the way of making me a little offering, I shall say to him, "Thanks, my dear boy, a thousand thanks. But the next time let it be cash, darling,—cash."'

'Quite right,' I approve. 'Do you remember how ridiculous John and Ethel Graham used to be, trotting out to buy one another Christmas presents and New Year presents and birthday presents? Wasn't it absurd that day each came home with a blotting-book for the other, and each confided to us how very ugly he or she thought the other's choice?'

'Yes, and how angry Ethel was when I suggested that she should keep her own purchase and let John keep his. But to return to our sheep. I am convinced that our natural protector, far from plotting a delicate attention, is harbouring a deep design which would not find favour in our eyes. I catch him looking at us sideways now and then, in a way that makes a cold shiver run down my mental back, so sure am I that he is up to mischief.'

'The fact is, we bore him,' I remark with modest candour. 'He didn't mind us as long as we were in the schoolroom and kept out of his way; but now that we are emancipated young women, with a fine taste for amusement, he doesn't know what to do with us. He has not got over last season in town—and yet we didn't hustle him about half as much as might have been expected. We really were very considerate.'

'Mark my words,' says Frances, shaking her forefinger impressively in the air. 'He has been hustled for the last time. We shall never see a season in town with him again.'

'Oh, come,' I retort angrily. 'He wouldn't escape the hustling if he tried to keep us down here. In that case he

would certainly find out that a man's foes are they of his own household.'

'It's all very well to say that. He has been limp as a rag doll in our hands for years—for just so many years as it has been easier for him to give in than to fight. But if I am not mistaken he is now bolstering himself up to strike a blow for liberty—for a solitary vegetable existence such as his soul loveth, for the house to himself all the day untroubled by voice of man, for nice quiet dinners in morning clothes and a smoking coat, with no conversation to disturb his digestion, and no one to rouse him from soothing evening slumbers afterwards.'

'What a hideous picture!' I say uneasily. 'And whereabouts do we come in?'

'Ah, where, indeed?' repeats Frances ominously.

I turn and face my younger sister with a qualm of anxiety. We are both of us as wideawake, worldly young minxes as ever paced a broad walk in front of a stately Elizabethan mansion on a fine September afternoon. But Frances possesses a shrewder cunning than I, a finer sense for trifles, a sharper understanding of what goes on around her. I sometimes get absorbed in day-dreams to the exclusion of my own identity; Frances never. The present and the immediate future are quite enough for her light mind; and in all that concerns herself and her surroundings she has the eye of a hawk and the nose of a pointer.

CHAPTER II.

A VISITOR.

NEXT morning Mackenzie and his bedding-out present themselves as an unfinished task to my mind. About one o'clock I saunter out of the house and stand looking over the Dutch garden, which is blazing with every colour of the rainbow in the bright sunshine—red geraniums, blue lobelia, yellow nasturtiums, purple heliotrope, and gay representatives of every possible hue, with complexions all enhanced by their soft setting of emerald turf.

At the far end is Mackenzie, erect and dignified, surrounded by myrmidons snipping and cutting and filling big wooden baskets under his lordly directions.

I stand still in the cool shade of the house, waiting for him to notice my expectant attitude and stalk up stiffly and rheumatic-

ally for his delayed orders. But Mackenzie gives no sign that he is aware of my presence. I wave my big lace parasol. Still he takes no notice, though one of the myrmidons seems to be calling his attention to my signals.

'Tiresome old bear!' I grumble to myself as I emerge into the sunshine and unfurl my parasol. 'He is sulky, I suppose, because I left him yesterday.' And like Agag I 'walk delicately' down the steps; it is difficult to walk otherwise than delicately in Louis Quinze shoes with three-inch heels.

'I will tell you what I should like in the other beds now, Mackenzie,' I say when I get within earshot, and he is obliged to come forward, though with obvious reluctance.

'Ou-ay, Miss Esmé,' is the dubious reply.

'I don't care for so much pink,' I go on; 'it clashes with the scarlet, and I think those centre beds would look better done with any other colour. What can we have instead?'

No response.

'For pig-like sulkiness give me Mackenzie when he considers himself neglected,' I ejaculate inwardly. 'Now shall I read him a lecture on his duty to his betters, or shall I let him plunge still further in the mire first?'

And I glance speculatively at him. But instead of the well-known obstinate twist on his rough face, I meet a doubtful—one might almost say a compassionate glance which puzzles me.

'Well, Mackenzie, what are you thinking about? Have you nothing that would do instead of the pink geraniums?'

'It's not that, Miss Esmé, it's not that,' returns Mackenzie slowly.

'What is it, then?'

'Well, it's just the master, if ye must have it, Miss Esmé.'

'The master!' I echo in astonishment. 'Why what on earth has the master to do with it? You know he never takes the least interest in the garden.'

'Which makes it all the more extraordinary,' caps Mackenzie. Having been forced to speak out, he is forgetting his hesitation and rapidly assuming the fussy important air without which it would be impossible for even the best of domestics to deliver a piece of news. 'The master came along this morning and gave me expleecit directions' (Mackenzie's language is always as polysyllabic as the occasion will allow), 'that the summer bedding-out next year was to be upon precisely the same plan as the

existing one, and that the ground was to be presently prepared for the reception of bulbs.'

'Bulbs!' I gasp. 'But they come out in the spring!'

'Most assuredly, Miss Esmé. The master's express phrase was, "I wish to have a cheerful spring bedding-out, Mackenzie."' Before the master's exact phrase is well out of Mackenzie's mouth, I have turned sharp round and am making for the house as smartly as the aforementioned high heels will let me. A spring bedding-out! What does he mean by that? Why order bulbs to flower and flourish when he and Frances and I will be disporting ourselves in Belgrave Square? And if he has the tiniest, remotest intention that we shall not disport ourselves in Belgrave Square at bulb-time, then let him avow it at once, and during the winter let it be decided who is the better man.

But in half a dozen strides Mackenzie is beside me.

'One word, Miss Esmé, if you please. The master did not forbid my mentioning the matter to you, but I gathered from his language that he would prefer to acquaint you with his plans himself, and that he intended doing so this afternoon. I should take it kindly if you would say nothing about my communication until then.'

At that moment there appears round the corner of the house a figure which sends the bulbs and Mackenzie and righteous wrath, and even the season in town, all into the background of my mind—a tall figure in grey, with laughing grey eyes to match, and the assured smile of one certain of his welcome from all the world.

'How do you do, Miss Nugent? You see I have taken you at your word and come at lunch-time.'

'You have also come at the precise moment when a domestic thunderstorm is about to burst forth,' I answer, laughing. 'Never mind, don't be frightened; in consideration of your weak nerves it shall be postponed for a while.'

'Then it was you who were about to do the thundering, eh? Are you a good hand at it?'

'Very,' I reply gravely. 'I have a fine flow of language, and upon these occasions it is more forcible than elegant.'

'Then please don't postpone the row on my account. There is nothing I should like better than to assist—in the French sense of the word of course. Who is the offender?'

'Uncle Frank,' I say. 'I have just discovered that he is har-

houring dark designs of rural bliss next spring instead of taking us up to town.'

'Ha! ha! Poor old boy! I'm afraid he will find out that the best laid plans of mice and men, &c.'

'I hope so,' I return severely. 'It won't be my fault if he does not; and in the meantime I think it is very horrid of you to take his part in that heartless manner.'

'I am not taking his part; I should not *dare* to,' with laughing, audacious emphasis, 'but I can't understand why all you ladies are so fond of town. It beats me altogether.'

'Anything that beats you must indeed be incomprehensible,' I retort sharply.

I am disappointed that he does not show more serious interest in our movements next spring. At the very first mention of the possibility of our not going up to town had not my thoughts flown straight to him? and had not the fear of not meeting him sent a sharp pang through me? I had pictured him walking desolately and disconsolately past the shut-up house in Belgrave Square and wafting a whole gale of sighs in the direction of the caretaker's window; and now here he is smiling unfeelingly at my wrath and wondering what I want to go to town for.

'That's very unkind of you,' he says solemnly. 'If you really think my intellect infirm, you should not hurt my feelings by alluding to it.'

'I should not have descended to a remark upon your intellect,' I return, laughing, 'if you hadn't put me out by your callous indifference to our woes—Frances' and mine.'

'They are not woes yet,' he answers calmly; 'they do not exist; they are phantoms of your imagination. I have not the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with your uncle, but, from the little I have seen of him, I feel sure that he goes down like a ninepin in any difference of opinion with two such determined young people.'

'It is very odd,' I reflect metaphysically, 'how Uncle Frank always contrives to give everyone the impression that he is so good-natured and easy-going—he is, in a way, and yet—anyhow there's the luncheon gong. Come along, you needn't be frightened of broken decanters flying about. The family linen shall not be washed in your presence.'

Inside the billiard-room Frances is lounging on one of its

many sofas. Frances lounges deliberately and perpetually. She has discovered that she looks better slightly dishevelled, with her curly hair standing fuzzily out and the lace on her summer frocks tossed about—more Greuzey, as she expresses it—and as it coincides with her natural instinct to make herself as luxuriously comfortable as possible, she passes most of her time in the country with her feet tilted up, her head buried in the softest attainable cushion, and a French novel open on her knees.

She looks fragility itself, so diaphanous that one can almost see through her, so slim that one can almost imagine a rough wind breaking her; and experience has taught her that a reputation for delicacy is by no means to be despised—a comfortable excuse for evading disagreeable duties. She is, however, but another instance that 'things are not what they seem.' Rarely has daughter of Eve possessed a constitution so sound, muscles so tough. This tall, willowy slip of a thing will get up from a long course of French novels and soft cushions not in the least out of condition for walking all day and dancing all night—if she wants to.

'H'm, h'm,' I can fancy her murmuring to herself as she catches sight of me through the window with Mr. Vaudrey's broad shoulders in tow; 'so there's that young man come to lunch. What a fool Esmé is making of herself about him, to be sure! Clean bowled over by six-feet-one of good looks and nonentity. How do you do, Mr. Vaudrey?' jumping up with sweetest, candidest smile, blue eyes shining softly out under a transparent nimbus of ruffled yellow hair.

Ten minutes later we are seated around the luncheon table, and Uncle Frank has roughly and bluffly welcomed his guest. Uncle Frank has gone through life with the reputation of being 'a good fellow' simply and solely upon the strength of his roughness and bluntness. How can a man be aught but honest and open who talks of nothing but 'beasts' and 'roots' and 'dawgs,' and very little even about them?

'Walked over from Fellport, eh?' he says presently to Mr. Vaudrey. 'Come by the stile at the foot of the clover patch?'

'I certainly came over a stile, but whether it was near a clover patch, upon my word I don't know. Mrs. Stuart told me it was the nearest way.'

'Trust her for knowin'. Don't suppose there's a soul within

ten miles round knows cross-country like Mrs. Stuart. Ever seen her ride ?'

'Not with the hounds.'

'Well, it's worth seein'. How's her black-and-tan terrier, eh ? Last time she came here he'd got the mange.'

Frances is watching Uncle Frank surprisedly. His broad red face is flushed redder than ever to-day. His long eyes glance uneasily around. They are incongruous, those eyes—they are so long and look round so far on each side ; it is odd to see such sly eyes in so bovine a countenance. His conversation as recorded is not voluminous, but it is just now loquacious in the extreme for Uncle Frank. He welcomed Mr. Vaudrey with effusion—one might almost say with relief ; whereas the sight of a stranger usually has a stupefying effect upon his flow of language.

'Where have you been all the morning, dear ?' Frances asks him ; 'I went to look for you about twelve o'clock and I couldn't find you anywhere.'

Her question is aimless, and is simply prompted by the desire to draw him into a conversation with herself and leave Mr. Vaudrey free to talk to me. We have a strict, unspoken code of honour, wherein each backs up the other in her respective flirtations. Frances does not approve of Mr. Vaudrey, and will probably tell me so by-and-by with small lack of candour, but in the meantime she will play fair.

'Where was I ?' repeats Uncle Frank with an awkward stammer. 'About the place somewhere, of course.'

'Well, I looked in the library,' goes on Frances argumentatively, 'but I only disturbed William, who was examining your letters. He *said* he was dusting the writing table, but I never heard of a footman dusting before, and he hadn't any duster either. It was awkward of him to get caught, though I dare say he knew you would not mind, as you never have any secrets, have you, dear ?'

Uncle Frank gives an uncomfortable grin, and she goes on blandly, 'I think your plan is quite the best not to make any mysteries with the servants. It is so degradingly useless. I'll tell you what always amuses me, the way Priestman knows what things I am going to wear without my telling her. She invariably puts out the right gowns upon the right occasions, and she even estimates my friends aright down to my gloves. It is not only that when I am going to a duchess's she puts out a

clean pair and to little Mrs. So-and-so's a pair of dirty tan, but she actually seems to know when and where I am anxious to make a good impression, and that is a thing I don't always confide even to Esmé.'

Uncle Frank fidgets uneasily, but he is doomed to listen to Frances' light chatter, for Mr. Vaudrey and I are sailing in imagination from Yokohama to San Francisco. He has just come home from the regulation globe-trotting and is tracing his wanderings upon a King Pippin apple for my benefit.

'It is a sad blow to me,' he says gravely, 'to find that the standard for feminine education is so terribly low, that a young lady whom I have hitherto considered one of the brightest and most highly cultivated of her sex, should actually confess herself ignorant of the name and position of the capital of the mighty empire of Japan, and should even seem somewhat hazy as to the exact whereabouts of that empire.'

'It is quite true,' I return. 'I admit the justice of your remarks as far as Japan is concerned, and I don't mind confessing that at this present moment I am hesitating between the rival claims of Tokio and Yokohama; but this I *do* say, that when I left the schoolroom my geographical and general ignorance was not so dense and hopeless that my friends were compelled to send me off to find out by actual personal contact that Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg didn't all embrace one another in a corner of Italy. Why, Uncle Frank, there's the dog-cart coming round. Where are you off to so early?'

But Uncle Frank has already jumped up, pushing aside the aspic jelly with which he has been trifling; he has shaken hands with Mr. Vaudrey, and murmured a confused excuse for leaving him; he is out of the room before Robinson, the butler, has time to come in and announce the dog-cart. I have a vague impression that the word 'Brackham' is thrown at me, but while I am still repeating it in wonder at his unusual bustle, Uncle Frank's burly form mounts the dog-cart, the black mare trots past the dining-room window and down the drive.

Frances has followed him to the front door; she stands watching the dog-cart as long as it is in sight, and when Mr. Vaudrey and I join her in the porch she turns a white face and startled eyes upon us.

'You look as if you had seen a carriage full of ghosts, Miss Frances,' says Allan Vaudrey laughingly, 'instead of the perfectly

solid and substantial form of your revered uncle in the most modern of dog-carts.'

'I have seen something much worse than a ghost,' returns Frances solemnly. 'I have seen a large leather portmanteau tucked away under the back seat of the dog-cart, and my heart,' tapping that organ dramatically, 'is settling right down into my boots.'

Mr. Vaudrey looks puzzled.

'A portmanteau,' he repeats. 'Well, I suppose he is going off for a night or two, and doesn't want to make a fuss about it.'

'Ah, you don't know Uncle Frank,' groans Frances. 'Never before has portmanteau of his been packed without the assistance of the whole house. To move him it has always required the united efforts of Esmé and me, backed up by every servant in the place—and servants, to do them justice, are always ready for a move. My heart misgives me over that portmanteau.'

'But what is it you are so frightened of?' asks Mr. Vaudrey. He cannot see further into a milestone than any other man, and does not understand Frances' serio-comic grief. 'He will return, you know he will; and in the meantime I should think you two would get along all right without him.'

Frances shakes her head and draws down the corners of her mouth. Allan Vaudrey is no particular friend of hers, and she is not going to choose him as a confidant; though at this moment she is too full of the matter in hand to hold her tongue entirely.

'The servants know all about it,' she remarks absently; 'they have been eyeing us compassionately for days past, and when I scolded William this morning he never answered me once—and such a pert boy as he is, too! If Priestman were only here, she would find out in no time.'

'And who is Priestman?' asks Mr. Vaudrey again.

But Frances begins inconsequently to him—

Who is Sylvia? What is she,
That all our swains commend her?

and strolls into the billiard-room, leaving me to answer.

'Priestman is our maid. Such a nice creature, so clever, and so devoted to us; but she is away for a fortnight's holiday.'

CHAPTER III.

THE BLOW.

ALLAN VAUDREY has returned whence he came—over the stile by the clover patch; and in the billiard-room at Billington, Frances and I are waging battle royal over his departed person.

‘You can do so much better,’ Frances is saying, raising herself on her sofa and fixing a yellow brocade cushion comfortably behind her so that she can focus my upstanding person without ricking her neck. ‘That is the beginning and end of it all. I don’t deny his many good points, but you ought to do better for yourself.’

I had tried to slip off quietly for a solitary stroll. I wanted to think about Mr. Vaudrey’s visit, and con over his looks and words—each glance of the grey eyes which had been gazing so admiringly into mine—each tone of the pleasant voice. But Frances considers that the moment has arrived for *her* voice to be uplifted, her remonstrance heard.

‘I ought to do better?’ I repeat with a vague smile. ‘You take it very much for granted that I can do this.’

I place my walking stick resignedly in the stand, and come a little nearer, not at all unwilling to be told that I have only to stretch forth my hand and Allan Vaudrey will be mine. I am not certain of it myself, and would like to be assured that lynx-eyed Frances has seen the look in his face that stirred my heart to-day.

But Frances has not been biding her time so patiently only to hold forth upon Allan’s devotion now; far different is her theme.

‘I don’t say you can do this, as you put it. I have not seen enough of Mr. Vaudrey to know whether he cares for you; and I can’t tell how much he is in the habit of hanging about girls. But this I *do* say, that if you don’t take care *you* will be falling head over ears in love with him—and I want you to look at him all round while there is yet time.’

‘I think it is horribly vulgar to discuss Mr. Vaudrey like this,’ I exclaim inconsistently, all red with annoyance at the nettle I have grasped instead of the rose I expected.

‘Don’t call *it* vulgar—call me vulgar,’ returns Frances placidly; ‘it may relieve your feelings, and I don’t object in the least, I have long ago resigned myself to the fact that I have a

vulgar mind. If it is vulgar to care whether one drives in a carriage or goes afoot, whether one is dressed by Worth or clothed by William Whiteley, whether one lives upon artistic dishes by a French *chef* or is kept alive by Irish stew and milk puddings—then I admit the soft impeachment. But we weren't discussing my prospects; we were talking about yours, and you know very well you are as fond of the good things of this life as I am. Come, now, aren't you?'

'Every bit,' I admit.

'Then why this coyness? This is the very first time you have shied away from sifting out the ways, means, connections, and tender sentiments of any man we have ever come across. Haven't we both, ever since we could toddle, accepted the fact that it is absolutely necessary for us, even more than for other girls, to make good matches? And haven't we—motherless, chaperonless, and pretty as we are—steered clear of ineligible with such perfect success that never once have our names been coupled with any but the best *partis*? And now, to my dismay, I see you hovering upon the brink of an affair with a younger son—and a younger son of screws and nails, too!'

I am guiltily silent. I sit down in the big cane rocking-chair and swing gently to and fro. Frances rolls the pale ribbon that flutters from her white gown round and round her long, fidgetty fingers, and seems absorbed in making five loops of equal length; but I am well aware that no change of expression in my face is lost upon her.

'It is much better to be the younger son of screws and nails than to be the younger son of acres only,' I say presently. 'Sir Joshua has only the two, and these new rich men always divide the money equally between their children.'

'Not when there's a title,' returns Frances inflexibly. 'The old boy is certain to leave every sou with the baronetcy, with some consoling remark in his will to the effect that the name of Vaudrey must be kept up; and your friend Mr. Allan will be expected to superintend the business in Manchester or Birmingham or wherever it may be. There would be nothing in life for you to do but take an interest in the factory girls.'

'As to making a fuss over the business,' I say reflectively, 'that's all exploded nonsense. No one cares two straws about blue blood nowadays.'

'Not if you have money enough to carry the position,' grants

Frances; 'but that is just what Allan Vaudrey won't have—and it puzzles me what you can see in him to infatuate you so.'

'He is very good-looking,' I murmur weakly.

Frances shrugs her shoulders. 'Tastes differ,' she remarks. 'There is plenty of him, no doubt, and I admit that he is clean-looking, but I don't care for fair men run up by the yard myself.'

'Run up by the yard!' I repeat angrily. 'You talk as if he were a weedy sort of creature, and you know he is a first-rate athlete and was in the Oxford eleven.'

'He is frightfully lazy,' continues Frances argumentatively.

'He will never make his way in the world.'

'I don't know why you should say that,' I retort. 'He took a double first at Oxford.'

'So have all the dullest men I know. Show me a man who takes high honours at college, and I'll show you a man who considers himself justified in sitting down and twiddling his thumbs all the rest of his life.'

'You can't call Mr. Vaudrey dull,' I exclaim triumphantly. 'He is most amusing.'

'His head is full of Bab ballads, if that is what you call amusing,' returns Frances.

'You wouldn't be so contemptuous if he quoted them to you instead of to me,' I remark with sisterly frankness.

'Possibly not,' owns Frances candidly.

Another pause. The old Sheraton clock in the corner strikes four, and plays the classic ditty, 'Pray, goody, please to moderate the rancour of your tongue.'

With my outward bodily eyes I gaze from the big window, whose arched top is filled with painted glass quarterings of defunct Nugents, over the quaint, many-coloured Dutch garden where Mackenzie is engaged in an undignified hand-to-hand combat with a persistent wasp; with my inward, mental eyes I am beholding a big, broad-shouldered, manly form as it leant with crossed arms over the orchard gate half an hour ago.

'After all, Frances,' I say at last, slowly though and with doubtful hesitancy, 'why are we so anxious to make brilliant marriages?'

Frances' eyes are Japanese in shape, and slant upwards in curious contrast to her blonde colouring; but at my unexpected and heretical query they become round with horror, and her pretty pointed chin drops in alarm.

'Why?' she repeats; and then, with amazed terseness, 'why, that we may trample instead of being trampled upon; that we may snub instead of being snubbed.'

'I can't imagine anyone snubbing me *twice*, in whatsoever state of life it may please Providence to call me,' I remark calmly. 'Really, Frances, if one goes to the bottom of it all, what can one be more than happy? And I have grave doubts sometimes as to whether I should be happy if I had everything else I could wish for, and yet were tied to a man I did not like.'

'But why should you not like him—the imaginary him?' returns Frances quickly. 'You will find that smothering any little dawning fancy which may happen to trouble you is excellent practice for getting your heart well in hand. I,' with modest pride, 'can speak from experience, as you know. Did not I tilt with my foolish *tendresse* for Lance Beresford and come off victor? And is not my heart—such as it is—perfectly ready to go with my hand when a fitting suitor presents himself? I remember,' with a shudder at the chilly retrospect, 'that it was a bitter afternoon last March when Lance came to say good-bye, and what quite decided me was the thought of coals. It struck me that upon 700*l.* a year one would have to economise in fires.'

'It being now a hot September, coals lose their gruesome importance,' I say with a laugh, only too glad to seize the opportunity of Frances' tender reminiscences to escape into the garden.

Down the stone steps and past the oval pond I walk swiftly, not desirous of being followed; along the laurel walk, from which far-stretching vistas of park and woodland strike unheeded on my preoccupied eyes; across the broad gravel drive and into the big red-walled kitchen garden, where rosy peaches and purple plums bewilder the attentive wasps. Then I pace more gently between the nodding white dahlias and pink hollyhocks.

Can I do better? That is the question. Of course, from one point of view, there is no doubt about it. I can marry someone of good family, richer, higher up in the world. But what do I want? After all, simply to be happy. And what do I require for that? A certain amount of money—naturally. Not with *anyone* could I endure love in a cottage—a damp, stuffy, rural cottage.

But I would rather live in a nice, smart little house in town with—well, with Allan Vaudrey, than in half-a-dozen big places with someone I did not like.

Then as to position—can I ever climb so high that there will not always be someone higher? . . .

I wonder if his people are very terrible, any of them. If they are, they must be gently but firmly dropped—all who are not likely to leave him money, at least . . .

Frances is afraid I am going to be carried away by my feelings. I am not carried away yet; only naturally our points of view are different. Frances wants me to make the match which would turn out the best stepping-stone for herself; and I, as might be expected, take a more lively interest in the affair for its own sake . . .

What is it about Allan Vaudrey that has taken my fancy, I wonder? He is not better looking than a dozen other men I know. He is not particularly witty—nor particularly wise—and yet I am so interested in everything he says or does . . .

‘Esmé, Esmé,’ Frances is calling at the top of her voice, ‘where are you?’ And, flourishing a letter in one hand, she comes along through the big garden gate, whose huge wooden supports are hidden in a perfect framework of purple clematis and Gloire de Dijon roses. ‘It’s from Uncle Frank,’ she exclaims breathlessly, ‘addressed to you, so I did not like to open it. Quick, see what he says. It is so funny of him to send it back from the station like this. He must have written it before he left the house.’

‘MY DEAR ESMÉ,—You and Frances will be surprised to hear that I am going to be married to-morrow. I thought it better to say nothing about it beforehand, as it might have led to words. You and Frances can always live at Billington the same as before if you like. The house in Belgrave Square is sold.

‘Your affectionate

‘UNCLE FRANK.

‘P.S.—I am going to marry Priestman.’

‘Priestman!’ screams Frances.

‘Priestman!’ I repeat with a breathless gasp.

A minute’s silence while we stare affrightedly at one another. Then Frances sinks into the garden-seat behind her and bursts into hysterical laughter.

‘So it is a joke,’ I ejaculate angrily; ‘I suppose you and Uncle Frank concocted it together. Well, all I can say is that for sheer unmitigated bad taste your joke would carry off the palm

anywhere.' And I stalk angrily away, but after a few paces turn and shoot another indignant glance at Frances. Something in her crumpled-up attitude strikes me with dismay. Suppose it should be no jest at all, but grim earnest. My knees turn weak and tremble beneath me; the few steps back to Frances' side seem a long journey. 'Answer me at once,' I exclaim sharply, seizing her by the shoulder and shaking her. 'Is this a joke or not?'

'I don't suppose we shall find it much of a joke,' returns Frances, raising her twitching face flooded with tears and giggling hysterically, 'but I dare say other people will. Ha! ha!'

'Then it is true,' I say, watching in dull amazement the rising veins in Frances' neck and dimly surprised to see her collapse so suddenly and quickly. 'At least if it is a joke, you know nothing of it.'

And, spreading out my creased letter, I examine carefully each slanting line and sprawling word. 'I am going to marry Priestman,' I repeat. 'He could never, never have written a thing like that for fun. Marry Priestman! A servant! Do you think he is off his head, Frances? Can nothing be done to prevent him from such disgrace?'

'She will wear the white straw bonnet with the marguerites that I gave her!' Frances bursts out, giggling again. 'I couldn't imagine what made her so positive that it would be out of date for me next season.'

'We don't even know where he is,' I go on, frowning painfully. 'And before we can get at him it will be too late.'

'Who, *who* will be the best man?' asks Frances. 'Will he be Lord Raylands or William the pert? chosen from the bridegroom's friends or the bride's?'

'I wonder if any of the servants know where Uncle Frank has gone,' I say, still hankering after pursuit and recapture. 'Perhaps Robinson could tell us.'

And I begin moving towards the house when Frances catches my wrist with hot, nervous fingers. 'Don't make a fool of yourself, Esmé,' she says sharply. 'He has most assuredly put himself beyond our reach, and any questions you ask Robinson will only be repeated for Priestman's amusement.'

'You are taking it in a most extraordinary fashion,' I exclaim angrily, obeying the natural and laudable instinct which invariably prompts a woman to turn and rend someone in her wrath; 'you seem to think there is nothing for us to do but twirl our thumbs

and make bad jokes. Do you realise what this (striking the offending document) means to us?’

‘Do I realise it? Good heavens!’ and Frances throws out her arms with wild abandonment. The hysterical fit has passed away, leaving her small flowerlike face lined and drawn out of all semblance of beauty. ‘Do I realise what it means to us? I think I do—only too well. It means that while this morning you and I were the Nugents of Billington—criticised, pulled to pieces if you like, but still envied by all the women we know—this afternoon we are neither more nor less than “poor things.” That is what they will say, “We are so sorry for them, poor things.” We are nobodies now—you and I, Esmé—with no home, no money, no place in the world.’ And she bursts into bitter tears.

(To be continued.)

IN A BURMESE PRISON.

‘AND the sentence of the court is that you be kept in penal servitude for the term of your natural life.’

Thus the judge concludes his address to the prisoner, and the interpreter mechanically repeats the words to him in his own tongue.

The trial, which has lasted all day, is over at last; Nga Hline has been convicted of dacoity accompanied with incendiarism and mutilation. The gang he led is known to have committed more than one murder, besides lesser crimes, but the guilt of these could not be brought home to Nga Hline himself. For months his name has been a terror in the district, and it seemed as though he could defy the law and ravage the country with impunity; until a small party of Karens, thirsting for the Government reward of two thousand rupees, organised a systematic chase which ended in his capture. His followers, alarmed by the exaggerated reports brought by their informers as to the formidable expedition in pursuit, had scattered and hidden, but ‘Boh’¹ Hline, singled out and relentlessly hunted down for the price placed upon his head, was at last caught alone, and brought in triumph to headquarters trussed up with ropes.

A miserable-looking object he is, as he cowers in the dock, apparently trying to realise the full meaning of his sentence. A small, spare, thin-visaged man, whose features have nothing in them that would bear out his character of a cruel ruffian and leader of men; whom, had he come before the court on a charge of stealing a handful of rice, anyone would have passed by as a poor hungry-looking wretch, hardly dealt with if he got a week’s imprisonment. And yet such was the power of his name that for months a sum large enough to be a fortune to any three natives was offered to whoever should kill or capture him before his career was checked.

‘For life.’ To no man on earth has the prospect such terrors as to the Burman. Lazy and indolent by nature, to change the unrestrained liberty of the jungles for the existence it is Nga

¹ Nearest English equivalent, ‘Chief.’

Hline's destiny to lead behind those high grey walls outside the town is worse than death itself. He knows what he has to expect too, for his trial has brought to light the fact that he spent six months in prison a few years ago. He will find plenty of his old companions there who, less fortunate than himself in evading the law, have long since been lodged in safety, forgotten by all who knew them and missed by none. Every jail in Burma has its complement of such life convicts—reckless desperadoes whose presence is a standing source of anxiety to those in charge of them.

Let us follow Nga Hline, and, having heard the tale of his atrocities in court, learn how he is to atone for them.

He is ushered into a small office just inside the main gates of the prison, where the officials transact business. The fettered convict squatting on the floor pulling the punkah stares idly at the new-comer, who looks about him as though awakened from a dream. Two warders take possession of him and strip off such clothing as he wears—a blue cotton putsoe¹ and a dirty white jacket—presenting him in exchange with a coarse brown cloth to bind around his loins, and a strip of sacking which is to serve as his bed. The convict barber next appears in charge of a warder, and the long masses of black hair the owner was so proud of are shorn off close. You would hardly recognise Nga Hline now, for he emerges from the barber's hands as bald as your palm. Stay, there is a small tuft left on the top of his head which distinguishes him, as a convict for life, from those undergoing terms of years, who are shaved quite bare. The jailer enters his name in the big prison register, and Nga Hline has done with it for ever. He is No. 5002 now, and will never be anything else. In addition to his loin-cloth and bedding, he receives a 'thimbone,' a metal plate measuring about nine inches by five, on which a paper form is pasted, bearing his number, age, sentence, the number of the section of the Indian Penal Code under which he was convicted, and ruled columns headed 'Punishments' and 'Awards.'

He has got everything, and his escort hurries him away to the blacksmith's workshop—a doghole in the wall, six feet by four, closed by a locked iron gate. Within sits the convict smith beside his forge, in readiness to rivet the irons upon No. 5002's legs. He is pushed in unceremoniously, and a wooden ticket branded

¹ The lower garment worn by Burmans.

with his number is handed in after him. Then the creaking gate is relocked until the job shall be completed.

At one time a new arrival in the jail received a tin medal stamped with his number, which was hung round his neck with a string, but it was discovered that a regular system of exchange was carried on amongst the men, whereby a long-term prisoner could exchange identities with a short-term fellow, adjusting the bargain with the friends of the latter outside. It is common for an habitual criminal to be taken up, immediately after his release, upon some other charge, which has been allowed to stand over pending his reappearance in the outer world; and such a man, conscious of his liability to this, would be willing to change medals, and therefore sentences, with another for a consideration.

In a large prison it was, of course, impossible for the officials to remember the personal characteristics of the ever-changing convicts, and numbers could therefore be bartered almost with impunity. A new system was consequently introduced, and each convict wears, welded round his neck, an iron ring as thick as a lead pencil, which passes through another attached to the wooden ticket, and thus ensures him against the danger of losing his identity.

The smithy gate is unlocked again, and No. 5002 stumbles forth. Round each ankle he wears a heavy ring, and two iron bars a foot long, linked together, connect them. Round his throat he has the necklet to which his ticket is secured.

Holding up his irons by the centre ring with one hand, and hugging his bed and 'thimbone' with the other, he makes his awkward way to the ward his attendants direct him to. This is a large bare room, whose walls consist of square teak posts four inches thick, placed about three inches apart. A wide verandah runs all round it, so that the sentries who guard the occupants at night can see every movement within from any point of their beat. It looks more like a pen for cattle than a habitation for human beings, but, in spite of its iron roof, it is airy and cool and well adapted for its purpose—the safe custody of the convicts at night. No. 5002 is ordered to place his bedding at the end of a row of bundles like it, and there we will leave him for the present, and go into the work-yard.

The yard is a triangular space, with a well in the middle of a grass lawn. Two sides are bounded by work-sheds, barred like the sleeping wards, and the third by the main wall of the prison. It is at least twenty feet high, but to give additional security a few

tiers of loose bricks are laid along its top in such a manner that the displacement of one would bring down an avalanche of its neighbours, and inevitably alarm the sentries in the nearest watch-tower. The mouth of the well is closed by an iron grating, to frustrate attempts at suicide. Opium-eaters who are, by their incarceration, suddenly deprived of the drug have been known to throw themselves into wells in a state bordering on insanity; so the grating is placed there, and a warder retains the key of a small trap through which a bucket can be let down.

It is nearly dinner-time, and two convicts are engaged in laying out the meal, under the eye of a warder. Two long cement slabs raised six inches from the level of the ground serve as tables, and upon these the uninviting viands are distributed—a tin can of washy-looking vegetable soup and a wooden platter of boiled rice for each man, the latter shovelled carelessly out of a wooden contrivance like a kitchen coal-scuttle, in which it has been brought from the cook-house.

In a far corner of the yard a number of convicts are busily engaged cleaning their irons with sand; they have just come in from working timber in the mud of the tidal creek outside, and having washed themselves are now, in accordance with rules, polishing up the fetters. The assiduous care some of them devote to the business draws from the superintendent the caustic remark that 'Some men will take a pride in *anything*.'

Squatting in a row on one side is another gang of thirty or forty convicts, presided over by warders. The superintendent's arrival is the signal for them to prepare for his inspection, and the head warder calls out in a dreary monotone the Burmese words of command.

'Stand up!' All rise doggedly.

'Irons straight!' Every man places his feet together and lays the bars connecting his ankles straight out before him.

'Show slates!' Every man takes his 'thimbone' by the lower corners and holds it against his breast with both hands, that the superintendent may see the face of it as he passes slowly down the line followed by the jailer.

If there is a type of revolting human ugliness, it is the Burmese jail-bird, with his shaven head and the unmistakable stamp of criminal on his vicious face. All convicts seem to acquire that look of low, half-defiant cunning from their associates, and a physiognomist would not hesitate to describe nine-

tenths of the men before us as bad characters, if he saw them in any society. Many of this gang are dacoits, and their breasts, arms, and necks are picture galleries of tattooed devices, fondly cherished by the owners as charms against death or capture. Some have rows of unsightly warts, like large peas, upon the breast and arms, which mark the spots where other magic charms have been inserted—scraps of metal and other substances inscribed with spells known only to the wise men who deal in such things. One or two natives of India are amongst the gang, and these are conspicuous by the absence of the tattooing universally found on the Burman's thighs.

The inspection proceeds. One prisoner's ankles are galled by his irons, and he applies for their removal; as examination shows one leg to be slightly injured, the sufferer is marched off to the blacksmith, who takes off the anklet for him. Such complaints are very common, but are viewed with suspicion, as the prisoners often cultivate abrasions in order to get a turn in the hospital, where, of course, they are not called upon to do any work. Another convict with sore eyes is put on the sick list, and a third who has an attack of fever follows him to the hospital.

A powerfully built convict at the end of the rank, in addition to the usual irons, has his ankle rings connected by a single straight bar, so that he can only stand with his feet twelve inches apart.

'Look at that fellow,' says the superintendent; 'he is in for five years, and his time would have been up in three months. A week ago he was down at the creek with his gang working timber, and must needs try to escape. He was up to his waist in the water, and dived under a raft, coming to the surface a good fifty yards down the stream. The guard never missed him until a shout from another man drew their attention, when they saw him swimming as hard as he could go, irons and all, towards a patch of jungle on the opposite side.'

Amongst a repulsive horde this man would take the first place without competition. 'Reckless scoundrel' is written on every line of his scowling face, and such he undoubtedly is. After the severe flogging his attempted escape earned for him, he assaulted and bit his guards and fellow-prisoners, and the bar between his anklets was the immediate result. The superintendent of a jail in Burma has not charge of a flock of sheep. The 'lifers' and long-term convicts to a man are desperate ruffians, who would

mistake leniency for weakness, and can only be ruled by the sternest discipline and severest measures.

The inspection is over and the order is given to go to dinner; the gang shambles off clanking, and the men take their places round the slabs, a convict warder, or good-conduct man in a blue forage cap, taking the head of each. Another word of command and they sit down and attack the food; the noonday sun is blazing upon their bald heads, but no one minds that, and the convicts dispose of their soup and rice with a vigorous satisfaction that betrays this to be the event of their day.

Dinner over, they go in pairs to the trough beside the well, where they take a drink of water and fall in to await the order to return to their various occupations. Some spend the day at looms, whence the coarse cloth used in the jail is turned out, others at the oil-presses and sawpits, or the mortars wherein the paddy is husked for the prisoners' daily rice. Gangs of short-term men are marched off holding hands to work outside the walls at the timber-yard, or, if fortunate well-behaved convicts, to the garden. Long-term prisoners are sent to the hardest, coarsest work within the walls; there is no prospect of the slight change of scene ex-mural labour affords for them. Hammer in hand, they sit day after day breaking stones, which they do in the listless mechanical way peculiar to prison labourers. Well fed and kept steadily at work, they are, as the superintendent points out, in perfect muscular condition—a fact to which they are quite alive, and which does not conduce to their good behaviour.

Conspiracies to break out are not uncommon, although, owing to the system of never allowing one batch of men to remain together for more than a night or two in succession, they are seldom matured. A determined attempt to 'break jail' took place in the great central prison at Rangoon a few years ago, resulting in a stand-up fight between warders and convicts. Some twenty 'lifers,' confined in a large stone cell whose gate opened upon their work-yard, were the culprits. The hammers and road-metal which provided their daily labour were kept in this yard, so the first aim of the convicts was to obtain access to the shed where these weapons lay. About midnight the attention of the sentry was called to the illness of one of the occupants of the cell by another man, who was apparently the only wakeful member of the gang besides the sham invalid. A Madrasee apothecary was called to the grated window of the den, and obtained sufficient

information to enable him to prepare some remedy. Seeing that all the convicts were sound asleep on his return with the potion, he did not attempt to give the medicine to the sick man through the window, but, against rules, caused the guard to open the gate, intending to take it into the cell himself. The instant the gate was opened the slumbering convicts sprang to their feet, rushed at the apothecary and knocked him down in such a position that his recumbent form effectually prevented the guard behind closing it. They quickly made their way into the workshed, and, arming themselves with hammers and stones, prepared to resist the warders who had been attracted by the noise and the shouts of a sentry on the wall. A furious conflict now ensued between the warders, big muscular Punjaubees, armed with heavy cudgels, and the convicts with their extemporised weapons. The warders were reinforced until both parties were fairly matched, and the rough and tumble fight in the dark progressed amidst extraordinary confusion. The work-yard was overlooked by two huge wings of the jail in which a large number of prisoners were confined; these men were roused to a pitch of frantic excitement by the uproar below, and they dashed about their wards like caged animals, with screams and yells of encouragement to their fellows. The sentries on the watch-towers on the main wall meantime kept up a desultory fire in the air to prove to the convicts the impossibility of passing that, if they should succeed in scaling the high spiked iron railing of their yard.

The combatants fought hand to hand for some time, neither side gaining any advantage, whilst above the roar of human voices, and the sickening crash of heavy clubs on the convicts' shaven skulls, the alarm bell clashed out a warning to the military that their assistance was required. Warders had been summoned from all parts of the jail, and a general outbreak seemed imminent, when the appearance of the superintendent with a revolver suddenly decided matters. Panic seized the convicts, and they dropped their weapons with one accord and crowded back into the cell, leaving two of their number dead in the yard.

It would be impossible to conceive a more ghastly sight than that row of naked, trembling convicts, as the warders now ranged them in the vaultlike den to be counted. The dim light of oil lanterns fell upon upturned faces, naturally repulsive, but now positively startling in their hideous disfigurement of dust and clotting blood.

Every man was streaming with blood from wounds about the head more or less severe, for the convicts had fought with the desperation of men to whom success meant liberty. They were doomed to drag out their lives in that earthly hell; a flogging was the worst that could happen them if their attempt failed, possible freedom the reward if it succeeded. Who would not risk the pain of the first for the slenderest chance of regaining the second? They took the risk, and fate had gone against them. The excitement was over, and they huddled together against the wall of the cell in an agony of fear for the consequences their night's work would bring upon them to-morrow, staring enviously at those whose wounds necessitated their removal to hospital. For them, at least, a few days' reprieve was certain before they could suffer the lash, and the subsequent punishment drill.

Stone-breaking, after all, is not the worst form of labour. Come over here, under the main wall, where a gang is undergoing two hours' 'shot-drill.' They stand in four ranks, about six feet between each man and rank; just now they have paused for a few minutes' rest, and every eye is fixed upon the warder who will give the signal to begin again. Each man has a heavy shot lying at his feet, and the warder, standing in the shade where he can keep the squad in full view, holds a small Burmese gong and hammer. 'Tang!' goes the gong, and every convict stoops, picks up his shot in both hands, and stands erect with it upon his shoulder. There is a five seconds' pause, when 'tang!' goes the little gong again, and the convicts grasp their shot and replace them on the ground. Another pause, and the monotonous 'tang' gives the signal for them to repeat the process, which they do with the silent precision of an automaton. No wonder that men kept long at such purposeless labour acquire the lowering look of brutal stupidity that is so common amongst them. It is terribly hard work; the state of perspiration the men are in seems to prove that shot-drill, under the blazing Indian sun, is ample punishment for any ordinary breach of rules a prisoner may commit.

It is curious to observe how work, properly so called, influences the countenance of a convict. By way of contrast to the men at shot-drill, look at those in the sheds, employed on carpentry and the beautiful wood-carving which is a Burmese speciality. The prisoners thus employed take an interest in their work, with the most marked results; those in the wood-carving department, particularly, seem a totally different class from the convicts outside.

The mind works with the fingers in the carver's case ; watch the nicety with which he finishes off that dragon's tooth, and the attention he bestows on it. This is not mechanical work, which leaves his thoughts free to brood over his captivity, and, it may be, plan attempts at escape. It seems rather an anomaly, perhaps, that a convict should expiate his crime by working at a trade he can actually enjoy, as a carver does ; but reclamation as well as punishment is aimed at in a prison, and a man whose talent for such work becomes known during his confinement is sure of finding an honest means of livelihood on his release.

At one time the making of furniture and vehicles in the jails was stopped by Government as constituting unfair rivalry with free workmen outside. In prisons where large numbers of men had been employed in these industries great difficulty was experienced in finding work to keep them occupied. Nothing is so dangerous as an idle population, and it was a great relief to those responsible for the safe custody of prisoners when the veto was removed.

The jail is a great institution in Indian and Burmese stations. Your syce breaks the shafts of your dogcart ; send it round to the jail to be repaired. New matting is wanted for the verandah ; you can get it in the jail. You want a piece of furniture ; whether it be a wardrobe or a whist-table, you will find what you require in the jail workshop, and if there does not happen to be one ready you can get it made. They take a longer time to do it than free artisans would, but you can depend upon sound material, good workmanship, and reasonable prices ; so the jail industries flourish, and the cost of supporting the criminal classes falls with comparative lightness upon taxpayers.

The garden is another valuable adjunct of the jail. The best-behaved convicts are sent outside to work amongst the vegetables with 'mamootee'¹ and hoe, and as this is the pleasantest form forced labour can take, it is a sphere of usefulness greatly coveted. Its chief attraction, no doubt, is the facility given for glimpses at the world around, for these amateur gardeners may be seen pecking at the earth with their tools in the same sleepy way the stone-breaking gang inside wield their hammers. But then, the warders are lax in the administration of prison rules in the garden, and the convict, screened by shrubs, can enjoy the luxury of tobacco. He saw the fag-end of a cheroot on the road this morning, and managed to pick up the prize and secrete it in his loin-cloth with-

¹ A tool resembling a magnified adze.

out being observed. It is at least two inches long, so he bites it in two, and secures the everlasting goodwill of the 'good-conduct man' beside him by presenting him with half. Of course, even could they procure a light they cannot smoke, but the cheroot is carefully unrolled and chewed into a 'quid,' with all the blissful feelings forbidden joys give to most of mankind. The vegetables, besides supplying the prison, are eagerly purchased by the residents of the station who cannot depend upon their own gardener's exertions. By a small monthly payment you can get daily supplies of whatever produce may be in season; certainly, the variety in Burma is not large, consisting in the cold weather of tomatoes, French beans, peas, carrots, salad, phenomenally small cabbages, and parsley. During the hot season pumpkins and a few other indigenous vegetables make up the list, but most of us at that time are glad to take what we can get, and try to be thankful.

The warders in Burmese jails are nearly always men from the Punjab and Northern India; the Burman is sometimes employed in this capacity, but he cannot divest himself of the prejudices his education has imbued him with, and these come frequently in collision with his official duties to their disadvantage.

I recall a striking instance of this, in which a phoongyee (Buddhist priest) who was spending a couple of years in jail had been sentenced to a few days' solitary confinement for being in possession of some betel-nuts. These, by the way, he had obtained by exercising the influence his sacred office confers upon a Burman warder. The Buddhist law carries greater weight to the mind of a true believer than mere prison regulations, and as the former distinctly says that it is in the first degree meritorious to administer to the wants of a phoongyee, perhaps we should regard the warder's breach of the latter with a lenient eye. Anyhow, weak human nature prevailed, and the warder's action no doubt earned him much credit in Neikban as a set-off to the punishment he received from the authorities in Rangoon.

The apartment to which the reverend convict was relegated was a stone cell, whose sole furniture consisted of a plank, supported at the ends by insertion into slots in the walls. It opened on a passage where the guard kept nightly watch, and in the door was a barred aperture about fifteen inches square to allow the tenant to be inspected. Nothing is more in accordance with the precepts than solitary meditation, and one might suppose that the phoongyee would have gladly embraced the opportunity his

temporary seclusion afforded to indulge in that sedentary but virtuous pursuit. He was, however, inclined to take more active exercise, and after nightfall cast about him for means wherewith he might effect his escape. The board which served as his bed was, as I have mentioned, fixed into the walls; it was not very rigid, so the phoongyee proceeded to jump on it with a view to forcing the ends out of the shallow sockets. He was interrupted by the appearance at the door of the Burman sentry, who begged him to desist.

‘I am a yahan (priest),’ said the convict, ‘and, as you must know, am forbidden by the law to sleep upon a raised place.’

He had got the board free by this time, and, thinking perhaps that the guard might not feel it inconsistent with his religious views to raise an alarm, lay down upon it feigning sleep.

The sentry was satisfied and returned to his post, but a few hours later he was placed in a new dilemma by the apparition of the convict phoongyee walking softly down the passage. He had used the narrow plank as a lever to force out two of the bars in the door, and with great exertion had managed to squeeze himself through the aperture.

It was certainly embarrassing; to lay violent hands upon the holy man (who was in trouble over a little matter of stealing) was out of the question to a strict Buddhist, whilst to permit him to escape in so deliberate a fashion would get him into a very serious scrape. The passage doors were locked and the phoongyee was safe for the present, so the sentry stifled his conscience and ventured to remonstrate with his charge on the impropriety of his behaviour. His eloquence proved in vain, and the situation was growing critical, when the tramp of the relief guard was heard outside. The sentry fell on his knees imploring the obdurate phoongyee to return to his cell, and the door opened upon this impressive tableau—a uniformed sentry in an attitude of respectful supplication before one of his prisoners! The Punjaubees who formed the fresh guard, not being Buddhists, were no respecters of phoongyees, and the enterprising priest was promptly bundled into a new cell, where he might meditate, if he pleased, on the prospect of the flogging in store for him next day.

I have referred once or twice to the jail hospital. An ordinary sick ward is depressing, but this long, narrow shed, barred like the others, with its row of invalids on their charpoys,¹ sends a

¹ The rude bedstead commonly used in India.

cold shudder through an unseasoned visitor. A heavy sackcloth screen distended on bamboos is hung outside to intercept the rays of the evening sun; just now it only serves to give additional gloom to the dreary place. Some of the men, not too ill to be restless, or suffering from a complaint that will not keep them here long, still wear their fetters; the harsh clank of iron and the low moans of men in pain are the only sounds that disturb the stillness. Here is a man, worn almost to a skeleton, lying half unconscious; looking at his helpless, emaciated form, one forgets his crimes and thinks only of his awful fate in having to await the hand of death amid such surroundings. Never a friend to come in with a kindly word; no one to chat with about the gay funeral ceremonies the dying free man loves to think of. The hospital attendants are convicts themselves, and appreciate their duties only for the facilities they afford for stealing the poor dainties provided for patients; they have no sympathy to spare for him. He will drop out of the dismal ranks unnoticed, and a number removed from the prison rolls will be all the difference. The warder slams the iron gate behind us, and turns the key noisily as though reminding the inmates that Death when he calls here will find only prisoners.

He has been there lately, for at the main doors of the jail a little procession is waiting, on its way out. Two convicts with mattock and mamootee lead it; two others follow carrying, slung loosely to a pole, a long mat-swathed bundle, whose outlined shape cannot be mistaken. Two warders behind hasten the lagging footsteps of the party as the doors swing slowly open.

This is what No. 5002 will come to at last. This is the only way he can expect ever to pass these doors again. For twenty years the man whose body those mats enshroud toiled day after day at prison tasks, knowing that he had nothing else to look for in this world. He saw prisoners come, work out their sentences and go, sometimes to return again for a while, to find him still drifting hopelessly on with time. It's all over now; no more stone-breaking or shot-drill for him; fever brought him his discharge last night in hospital, where they found him dead this morning. Take him away—the law has done with him. Scrape a shallow hole over there in the shady jungle, where scores of nameless creatures like him lie. Who was he? Nobody knows. Nobody cares to know. He was only a number yesterday, and for many yesterdays before; he *had* a name once, but had probably

forgotten it himself long ago. Put him in, put him in; don't keep the warders waiting. That's it! *tramp* down the yielding form in its crackling mats if the grave is too narrow. Now stamp down the earth above him; the pariah dogs will soon find him out if you don't. There's no need to mark his resting-place; no one is ever likely to ask where you buried him; and after next rains it will be so overgrown with rank weeds and jungle that the spot will be completely lost.

There! we have seen enough! This last act is in terribly grim harmony with those that lead up to it.

WITH A COCKATOO.

I.

MOST people would think that this was some new anecdote indicative of the sagacity of birds, but it is not.

Cockatoo is the name given to the small bush farmer in New Zealand. This is my personal experience of a cockatoo.

I arrived in New Zealand from Tasmania bearing the usual letters of introduction. I was hospitably received by the Governor at Wellington, with whom I stayed a few days. I did not care about remaining long in Wellington. That eternal 'Southerly buster,' from which there is no escape, those chill wooden houses, the pretentiousness of the third-rate streets—all combined to drive me 'up country.' Besides, I was most curious to see the beautiful scenery, of which I had heard so much, and to have some experience of bush life. I accordingly booked my passage to Wanganui by a small coasting steamer, the 'Stormbird.' She started on the evening of a very stormy Sunday, and the passage was indescribably dreadful. There was but one small cabin for men and women, for eating and smoking, or for whatever occupation one felt inclined for. For my own part, I writhed in very agony, and was thoroughly worn out on arriving at Wanganui in the morning.

Wanganui is a charming little town. Its streets and shops are good, its hotel is excellent, and numerous banks and stone buildings relieve the monotony of the wood houses. It has, in the vicinity, a river bearing the same name, and forming the centre of a bright and pretty landscape. Perhaps the fact of my having been disappointed with Wellington, and having had so disagreeable a passage, made me appreciate Wanganui more highly than I otherwise should have done. I certainly have the most pleasant recollection of that township.

But I was in pecuniary difficulties. My remittance from home had been sent to Tasmania, and I feared I should have to wait at Wanganui till it arrived. This, as my time was limited, would be most inconvenient. I went to the manager of one of the many banks, and, to my great surprise, he immediately volun-

teered to lend me a five-pound note on my simple I O U. I was afterwards looked upon by my bush friends as a kind of hero who had 'done a bank manager.' I telegraphed to the 'cockatoo' for whom I had a letter of introduction, and he forthwith sent back word that I was to come as soon as I liked. He lived about thirty miles from New Plymouth—further up the west coast, and there was a railway within a mile of his *clearing*. I packed a portmanteau with what I thought to be necessities, and got on the cars. It was raining hard when towards evening the train stopped at the little flag-station of Waipuku. Flag-stations are those at which the train is only stopped by request of one of the passengers. I jumped out into the rain, and expected to find my portmanteau, which had been duly labelled, standing on the rails. Not a bit of it. I shouted 'Guard!' and was answered by a score of mocking voices, from passengers who thought it a good joke to see a 'new chum,' as they call visitors from England and abroad, in such a fix. Just as I was in despair as to what to do, a man emerged from the darkness and said, 'Are you Mr. De Wyndt?' 'I am,' I replied; 'and if you are Mr. Johnson, I'm jolly glad to meet you.' I would have said more, for, not having had a friend to talk to for some time, I felt inclined to gush; but Johnson cut short my effusiveness by running to the guard's van, asking for my trunk, seizing it, and pulling it into the high road. But it was rather heavy. 'We had better leave it here for to-night,' he said, 'and the butcher can bring it up in the morning.' We accordingly took the trunk to a shed, which constituted the station, and prepared to find our way through the rain and wet to his *whare* or hut.

We had not gone far along the sloshy road when we heard a horse coming towards us at breakneck speed. Although it was by this time pitch-dark, and the road was by no means good, there was nothing very surprising in this. The Maoris never spare their horses. Up hill, down dale, over new metal, or through scrub, it is always the same canter, canter. The horses in New Zealand are, for the most part, undersized and not 'showy,' but they can stand a deal of knocking about, and are as enduring as camels.

We stood out of the way to let the horse pass, but unfortunately a coat I was carrying flapped in the wind, the horse shied, and his rider was thrown insensible at our feet. 'Run on as hard as you can till you get to a house on the right-hand side—there, drop all those things—and tell a man to come with a lantern; say I said so.' No sooner had Johnson said this than I dashed off, and

soon found a wooden hut by the roadside, evidently the 'house.' Pushing open the door, I found two or three men drinking. They looked up, but did not seem the least surprised at my intrusion. Nor did they turn a hair when I told them my story, only the 'boss' apparently of the shanty got up without a word, fetched a lantern, and followed me out. As he did this I heard one of his companions say, 'It's that fool Blake.' For my own part I thought that 'Blake,' if it was he, was dead.

When we got back to where I had left Johnson, we found him supporting the man against his knee. Blake—for that was his name—was simply dead drunk. It appeared that he was the drunkard *par excellence* of the neighbourhood. He never worked. He was kept in food and clothes by a hard-working brother, and spent the night drinking. It is the custom in the colonies, or at all events in the parts I have visited, to 'stand drinks' most profusely at the village or township bars. They call it 'shouting.' A man who is known not to have the means of indulging himself can generally get drunk at the others' expense. Drink is the curse of the colonies, and does far more harm really than any amount of rabbit-scourge or sheep disease.

Nobody in the world is so generous and hospitable as the colonist; but he has his weaknesses, and one of them is often an inordinate love of inferior spirits, and the pernicious concoctions sold as whisky or beer.

We carried Blake as far as the shed, I leading his horse. When we came to examine the man, we found that a special providence had saved his bones, and he was so far unhurt that Johnson and I felt no compunction in leaving him under the care of the 'boss' and resuming our homeward course.

Before doing so, however, we ripped the saddle off the horse, and turned him out into the neighbouring paddock. Under ordinary circumstances you never stable a horse in New Zealand. He doesn't like it. If he has had a hard day, give him a feed of oats and chaff, and then turn him out for the night. All the horses are taught to 'stand' when you get off, and you never buy one that won't. The horse in question had not budged an inch when he felt his rider slip off. Ten minutes more brought us to my friend's 'whare'—the Maori name for house.

I confess I was just a little aghast at its appearance. After the comparative luxury of Government House, it required some courage to make up one's mind to stay in a shed about twenty feet by ten,

made of common planks, and covered by a corrugated iron roof. There was no sort of path approaching the whare, which was some thirty or forty yards from the road. My host led the way, I floundered after him through the mud, every now and then knocking up against a felled tree or broken stump. As we passed through an enclosure, what afterwards turned out to be some bullocks and a pony sprang away into the bush. The door was raised a foot above the ground, and opening this with a key, my host bade me follow. He drew a light from his pocket, and lit a candle.

The room which I was now enabled to examine took up about half the shed. The walls were merely formed by the inside of the planks of which the place was built. Across the planks, about four feet from the ground, ran a cross-piece or beam which helped to strengthen the walls, and served also as a shelf on which were innumerable odds and ends—bits of candle, pencils, a bottle of ink, some string, nails and screws, knives, pipes, and tobacco. The tobacco was a plug of Virginian production known as ‘Ruby Twist,’ the best to be got in New Zealand, and very pleasant to smoke. You cut shavings off the plug with a penknife, and crumble them in the palm of the hand. The common sort, used in large quantities on the sheep-runs and among the poorest classes, is foul stuff.

In one corner of the room stood a kind of rough ‘horse’ of *rata*, a wood which takes the place of our deal, and on this was a saddle of pigskin, on the colonial pattern, with large knee-rolls, and D’s in the front. These D’s are indispensable for long rides, as they enable the rider to strap on his ‘swag,’ a roll in which he puts a change of shirt, and anything absolutely necessary for his journey. In front of the saddle, which was ready for use, was a bridle with a snaffle only, the curb being almost unknown in New Zealand. On the walls were several nails and hooks, from which hung one or two coats, a breech-loading gun, a billhook, a hatchet, &c. In the centre of the room stood a rough table, and this with two or three wooden chairs completed the furniture.

All this was so new to me that I stood taking it in without speaking. Johnson broke the silence. ‘You had better rip off your clothes and put on a shirt and trousers of mine. You will be glad of a bit of supper, and then we had better turn in.’ He led the way into the next room, the other half of the shed. This was very much the same as the one I have already described, but for two rude bunks, one at each end. These were made with

trestles, canvas stretched across two posts taking the place of mattresses. On this were several coarse grey blankets, one of which was rolled up to form a pillow. There were no sheets.

'Not quite like Government House, is it?' said Johnson. 'I don't know how you'll like it.' I assured him I was ready for anything.

In a few minutes I had divested myself of my wet clothes, and put on a pair of my host's buckskin trousers and a flannel shirt. He went about with his shirt-sleeves turned up, and I now did the same. 'Your arms won't stay that colour much longer,' said he. I found afterwards he was right.

We went back into the other room. A bright log fire was burning on the open brick hearth, the 'dogs' of which consisted of two large logs placed crossways.

When we first came in I did not notice the fire. This was because Johnson had covered it entirely with ashes in order to keep it alight, and also to prevent the sparks flying out. The supper consisted of some good bread and cheese, washed down with huge mugs of tea without any milk. After supper we drew two chairs up to the fire, cut ourselves pipes of tobacco, and proceeded to ask each other questions. His questions were mostly personal, mine more general.

'Well, I hope you'll stay here as long as you can stand it,' he said; 'it is pretty lonesome living all alone. I used to have a pal living with me, but now he's got a whare (pronounced 'warry') of his own. Some fellows have a Maori girl to keep house for them, but then people talk' (I should think so, thought I); 'and besides, he added, you generally have a whole tribe of them coming down on you for food and money.' I knew absolutely nothing about Johnson, but drew from him that he was the youngest son of a Liverpool merchant, and had been out only a few years.

'I made a mistake when I became a bush farmer. Thought I would rather be boss of a small place than a station hand, or anything of that; and now I've used up most of my capital.' 'How much did this house cost you?' I ventured to ask. 'Well, I made a good deal of it myself, but it came to seventy or eighty pounds. I have about 200 acres round it altogether. It was all bush when I first bought it. I have cleared about a third now.'

We talked on for about an hour. Then he suggested it was time to 'turn in.' 'We'll just wash up first, though.' So say-

ing, he opened a door which was opposite the one we had come in by, and which I found communicated with a shed at the back of the house. He came back carrying a tin pan and a cloth. Having filled the pan with hot water from a large pot on the fire, he washed the things we had used for supper, and I dried them. He put them away in a cupboard. We got into our respective bunks naked. I mention this because it was really the first thing which was hard to swallow; but I was determined to imitate him in everything. We then lit our pipes from our candles, which we had placed on the ledge which ran round the room like the one in the parlour. The candlesticks, by the bye, were simple squares of wood half an inch thick, with a nail through the middle which impaled the candle.

Our conversation at this point would not interest the reader. Notwithstanding the newness of everything, together with the roughness of the blankets, I fell asleep a very few minutes after the candles were blown out.

II.

I awoke to the sound of many waters. The rain was rattling down on the iron roof and pouring off in torrents. I had not noticed it so much the night before.

'Don't you get up before you want to,' said Johnson, after the usual morning salutations. 'I always get up early, or it wastes the whole morning.'

I was ashamed to follow his suggestion, so we both slipped on some clothes and went out to wash. This is how we did it. We heated some water in the huge pot on the fire. This was soon done, as the fire is only covered with ashes at night, and sometimes is not let out for weeks. Then we went outside the door at the back of the whare, where stood on its end an old wine-case with a tin basin on top. We, one after the other, stripped, and soaped ourselves with common yellow soap, standing the while on boards to prevent getting muddy. It was raining hard all the time, so, besides the washing, we were in a few minutes thoroughly drenched. Whilst I was thus engaged, Johnson had gone into the house. 'Keep an eye on the bush,' he shouted; 'there's a girls' school not far off.' But I was not interrupted. Having dried myself with coarse, hard towels, I went back into the parlour, and found Johnson making preparations for breakfast.

'Fried beefsteak and spuds,' he said, 'it's always fried beef,

steak and spuds. I don't care about mutton much.' He went to the fire and turned some slices of beefsteak which were frying in fat, with chipped potatoes round.

The rain left off soon after breakfast, but before going out the rooms had to be swept out, and the place generally 'tidied up.' Then Johnson said he would 'take me round.' We went out by the back door, and almost at the same time the sun came out, lighting up a beautifully wild scene. It is true that round the house the felled trees and the general litter presented a somewhat untidy appearance, but this was only close to the whare. Beyond grew huge rata trees, taller than any elms, and all amongst these, partially concealing the great trunks, were a variety of smaller trees and shrubs—the native honeysuckle, a tree in shape and colour somewhat resembling the ilex, stately tree-ferns, and cabbage palms. Covering the ground were masses of scrub and underwood—the native lawyer, a creeper of the vine species, so called on account of the innumerable thorns on the stem and leaves, which grasp hold of one as he tramples through the bush; and supple-jacks, not unlike bamboos, but possessing the same peculiarity as the banyan tree, namely, that the branches take root again and again, thus rendering the bush in places impassable.

My host was an excellent guide. 'You won't find any timber better than this in the old country,' he said. 'Rata is splendid building wood; nearly all the houses are made of it. It makes good fuel, too. In fact, it is good for anything. Yes, those tree-ferns are pretty things, but an awful nuisance when you're clearing. They seem to be soft like this all through,' hacking at one of them with his 'chopper,' 'but the centre is as hard as iron. You see those charred stumps round the whare, burnt all round, but not in the middle.'

The natives eat the heart of the cabbage palm, and very good it is. 'Put a bit of *this* in your mouth,' he said, breaking off some fungus which was growing on a rata trunk. I did so, and found it to be very cooling, but otherwise tasteless. 'Splendid stuff when you're thirsty,' said Johnson.

'We have a wonderful quantity of useful native plants,' he continued. 'There is the native flax. We haven't any near here, but in some parts it is very plentiful. All you have to do is to peel one of the leaves with a knife, and you have a fibre which is as good as any string. You can twist it up for the end of stock-whips, or do any blessed thing you like with it. Further

south you have the wireweed, something like the heather at home, makes splendid bedding, and can be used in half a dozen ways. Then there is a shrub, the buds of which cure you of almost any stomach trouble; and even those supple-jacks make good sticks and basket-work.'

'Rather like Robinson Crusoe,' I said, thinking he might be trying to impose upon my innocence. But I afterwards found that he might have gone much further than he did without exceeding the truth.

By this time we had reached a rapid stream which flowed between rocky moss-covered banks. I shall not easily forget the impression produced by the sight of this stream in the middle of the most exquisite vegetation. Overhead beautiful tree-ferns spread their fronds, almost excluding the light; under foot exquisite moss studded with rare ferns, the native maidenhair, and the still more delicate kidney fern. The last-mentioned have leaves the shape of violet leaves, but as thin as the youngest sprigs of maidenhair, semi-transparent, as large as the palm of the hand, and supported by black stems so slender as to be at a short distance invisible. The only place I have ever seen which could at all compare with this spot is the Anna Thal at Eisenach, in Thuringia. But then that is partly artificial, whilst this had never been touched by human hands. While we stood watching the stream an exquisite sound broke upon our ears. It was like the piping of those reeds which the dervishes in the East play upon whilst their brethren perform their strange devotions.

This piping was constantly being varied sometimes by even softer but sometimes by more metallic sounds; at one moment the song grew so loud that it seemed to be quite close, the next it appeared to melt away into the distance. Suddenly it ceased. It was a Tui—the most beautiful songster in the world. We saw one on a branch a few minutes later. It was about the size of a blackbird, the plumage of a blue-black with metallic hues, and in places almost like velvet. The beak was yellow, as were also the legs. At the throat it had two little tufts of white feathers, which gave the bird a rather quaint appearance. Fortunately in New Zealand some of the birds are protected by Government, but already many of them have died out. We followed the stream some hundred yards or so, every now and then putting up a pheasant. I determined to bring out the breech-loader at the earliest opportunity.

I had been under the impression that we were all this time going away from the house, and was rather surprised when, on emerging into a tolerably clear space, the whare was to be seen a few dozen yards off.

'Yes, the bush is very deceptive,' explained Johnson, half apologetically. 'When I first came out I was always losing myself, and even now when I go far I have to take very careful observations. All your time is so taken up getting away from native lawyers and chopping at supple-jacks, that you don't see where you are going.'

By this time the 'dinner' hour had almost arrived, but as this only consisted of bread and cheese, it was not a lengthy meal.

We smoked a pipe, and then Johnson said we had better get some wood in. We each took an axe with a long American handle, and looked about in the clearing for a suitable victim.

'Better finish this one,' suggested Johnson, pointing out a huge rata, which lay on its side like a slain giant, spreading wide its massive branches, some of which had already been 'tackled.' At first I was very clumsy at the work of felling. It is no easy task until your hands are in proper condition—yes, and the muscles of your arms.

Of course, like all beginners, I held the instrument as tight as I could; the consequence was that every time I struck the tree the blow was weakened by the strain of my right arm on the head of the axe. Under Johnson's tuition, however, I soon discovered that the proper way is to hold tight to the extremity of the handle with the left hand, and let the axe slip through the right till the two hands are close together. This will give an impetus unattainable in any other way. Also do not put any muscular force into the blow. Simply allow the axe to do the work by its own weight. Take careful aim, and never hurry. This is what Johnson told me, and the result of his advice was that my labour was lessened, and the effect thereof increased a hundredfold.

Nevertheless my host, who had lost most of his respect for me during the process of instruction, informed me that four times the work I did could be done in *half the time* by one man. I was just going to attack a fresh branch of the fallen tree when some one 'coo-eyed' from the road. I think the Australian 'coo-ey' is too well known for it to be necessary to describe it. It is a most useful call, as, although it can be heard a considerable

distance, it requires no great effort on the part of the person who uses it. But the 'coo-ey' is a knack, requiring some little practice to bring it to perfection. Johnson coo-eyed back to show that he had heard, and then despatched me to find out who it was who was calling. This proved to be only the butcher, who had brought up my portmanteau. He got out of his cart and gave me a hand up to the whare with the trunk.

This man had a peculiar manner which I have only noticed in colonists—that is, a complete disregard for the person he was addressing. Had he even taken the trouble to look at me, he must have recognised in me a 'new chum.' Alas! everybody else did. But no. He wished to make certain remarks, and if his victim had been deaf and dumb it would have been all the same.

'Not got that bit of fence up yet? Why, you'll have the bullocks turning them logs over presently, and then there'll be no keeping them out of the road.' And again: 'Now if I had had the building of that 'ouse, I should 'ave 'ad the 'ole of this side covered with hout-ouses, not the bush side—'taint no good there, that's protected like—but this side's bang in the wind;' and so on, and so on. He gave me the usual allowance of beef—a pound, I think, was the quantity, and then went back to his cart and drove on.

I began turning over the contents of my box, rather glad to escape any more felling, for my hands had already begun to blister, and my arms to ache. While I was so occupied Johnson came in by the back of the hut, his arms full of chopped wood. Having deposited the logs in a corner, he came and stood over me near the portmanteau. I pulled out a pair of thick shooting boots, and exhibited them with pride.

'No good at all,' said Johnson, 'go in a week.'

In this way he disposed of most of the things which I had brought. 'Too good,' was his usual remark. Only two shirts escaped his verdict. These I had bought at Wanganui. They were made of very thick serge, had double shoulders, and were furnished with outside pockets. 'If you can stand such coarse stuff next your skin, they're just the thing,' he said. He wore flannel himself. This is the kit one should have 'up country:' Three or four stout flannel shirts, a pair of buckskin or corduroy trousers, the only stuffs to withstand the bush; a tweed cap, some thick woollen socks, coarse pocket handkerchiefs, a stout leather belt. That is about all you will wear on a bush farm. Of

course under certain circumstances you require a few more things—a decent suit of clothes to go into the towns, a pair of breeches for long rides, and a white shirt or two. You should have two pairs of boots at least, like those worn by an ordinary English day labourer. I would advise anybody to take as little as possible in the way of articles of toilet—I mean brushes, combs, &c.—as if, later on, he wishes to travel on horseback, he will find how little can be squeezed into a ‘swag.’

When we had lost a little time over the portmanteau we washed and got supper ready, cut, lit, and smoked a pipe of tobacco, and then my first whole day in the bush was over.

III.

It would be tedious to describe the details of every-day life on a small bush farm. The routine is necessarily monotonous. But to a man who has passed half his existence in the more civilised parts of the world the novelty and freedom of bush life are not without their attractions.

I had been a few days on Johnson’s farm when he signified his intention of going into the town of New Plymouth. He had some business to transact.

‘My friend Gibson will look after you while I am away,’ he said, ‘and he has a lot of pheasants on his place you can shoot if you like.’

He had already pointed out Gibson’s farm to me, and I knew Gibson. As soon as Johnson had left me I took the breech-loader and some cartridges, with the two or three things I required for the night, and set out.

As I approached Gibson’s where I espied the proprietor seated on the doorstep. He was apparently grinding a barrel-organ made of white wood, on which was placed a sheet of paper—the music, I thought. But the organ gave forth no sound; and besides, how can you read music on a barrel-organ?

‘Hunkey boy, go it, you gay and festive cuss,’ I muttered to myself, quoting from Mark Twain. ‘Gibson must have got D.T.’ I advanced cautiously, but when Gibson saw me he relinquished the instrument, and came to meet me with a smile which dispelled my fears.

‘It won’t come,’ he said; ‘there’s something wrong with the cream—perhaps you will be luckier.’ He had merely been churning.

I sat down and began turning the handle, noticing as I did so

that the paper was a copy of the 'Times.' I certainly had the 'lucky hand,' for in a very few minutes I felt the cream thickening in the box, the handle turned less freely, and half a pound or more of butter was made.

But how unsatisfactory is the process sometimes! You feel the butter 'coming,' you make a false movement—a slight jerk of the arm, and the butter dissolves into cream again. This often goes on for hours. A little hot water poured in occasionally helps the cream to turn. If there is not enough cream to fill the churn, so that the beater may strike the fluid at every turn, it is better to make butter by turning a stick in an earthenware jar—a wearying process, but fascinating enough when you are new to it.

Some cattle had got away down a sort of lane, and Gibson wanted to get them in before dark. We started off, taking with us his cattle dog, a sort of half-bred colley. We were passing through a paddock in which was grazing a horse.

As we came near the animal it put up its head, snorted once or twice, and then dashed at us, standing on its hind legs and charging us with its fore-legs like a kind of ram. I simply hopped over the fence, but Gibson kept the beast off with his stock-whip.

'Sell you that animal for a tenner,' said Gibson, 'a splendid beast to travel, and sound as a bell.'

'I think not, thank you all the same,' said I. And I felt myself go down forty per cent. in my host's estimation.

I may here mention that in New Zealand you hardly ever come across a buck-jumper. The horses in these islands occasionally have peculiarities and awkward habits, but buck-jumping is not one of them. They are too harshly treated when they are broken in ever to show much spirit. A large herd of horses are sometimes allowed to roam about in the hills or in the bush. When a colt is required to be broken, the whole herd is driven into a stock-yard. A young horse is singled out, and the others driven off again. When the youngster finds himself alone he often becomes very wild. I have seen one dash at a thick stockyard fence, and knock it to pieces as though it were matchwood.

If a station hand or any settler breaks in a horse, he usually does so by tying the head to the tail by means of a stout halter. In this position it is impossible for the animal to bolt or even kick much. It can only revolve round and round on its own axis, as it were. The man encourages this by shouting or cracking his stock-whip. After a time the man changes the halter so that the head

should be twisted on the other side. Soon the animal becomes quieter. The man substitutes a bridle for the halter, and in an incredibly short time is able to get on to the beast's back. The Maori method is more cruel. The horse is blindfolded. A native gets on to the horse's back, and is secured so that he cannot come off except intentionally. The bandage is removed from the horse's eyes, and the moment he can see he dashes off. He is in a large paddock, surrounded by a high fence, so all he can do is to go round and round, and of this he soon tires. The operation is repeated until the beast is tractable, but sometimes the native is killed. This is a digression.

We soon came upon the cattle feeding by the roadside. Gibson's dog was wonderfully good at herding, and Gibson was smart enough with his stock-whip, but no sooner was a cattle beast brought into the road than another one went off; it was some time before we could get them all ready to drive back. There was one bullock in particular who was very nasty. He got his back well in the scrub and repelled the dog's attacks, occasionally making a run at Gibson or me. At last I got in behind him and dislodged him with a kick. The moment he saw the game was up he went on quietly enough with the rest. Gibson and the dog drove the cattle, whilst I walked in front to prevent them going too fast or breaking away. The supper that night was better than at Johnson's—Gibson went in for dairy-farming, usually a not very paying business in New Zealand. We had milk in our tea, and some of the butter we had made.

Gibson gave me a lesson in the use of the stock-whip. The big heavy whip is almost extinct, and now they use a light whip, which is really all that is wanted. The lash of these is only eight feet long, if I remember right. The handles are made of a hard wood, thick at the butt, tapering almost to a point where they join the thong, which in its turn is fine at the two ends and thick in the middle. The way to begin to learn the use of it is to stand on a stump or something high enough above the level of the ground to allow the thong to fall straight. This enables you to give the thong a swing, then a turn round your head, and finally a twist of the wrist which makes the 'crack.' As a 'new chum' I was much chaffed when I went through this manoeuvre. What was worse was that I often caught myself a tremendous cut across the face, or became encircled by the thong like a humming-top. It takes a long time to use the stock-whip really well.

I found Gibson a very agreeable companion. He had a large bookshelf full of useful books, all of which he appeared to know by heart. He could talk on almost any subject, had a fair idea of English politics, and was altogether a most superior individual. I afterwards discovered that it was some love affair which had prompted him to seek the seclusion of bush life.

It was with no small regret that on the following day I returned to my friend Johnson, who had come back sooner than he intended—or I wished.

I spent altogether three weeks in that part of the country, waiting for remittances from England. When these came, Johnson suggested that, in order to see the country, I should buy a horse and ride down to the south-west coast of the island to a sheep-run I intended to visit. The distance was altogether less than 300 miles, the road being pretty good all the way. There were numerous townships to put up at. The moment Johnson told one of his friends I wanted to buy a horse, everybody seemed to want to get rid of his. One man offered me his for 5*l.*, and had it not been for Johnson I should have bought it. A most comfortable little beast in its paces. I regret it to this day. As it was, I ended by taking a horse off the hands of one of Johnson's particular friends. It was not a good one, but I will not repay my host's hospitality with ingratitude. At all events, I gave only 10*l.* for horse, bridle, and saddle, and sold him a few weeks afterwards for half the price.

A day or two later, having completed the few necessary preparations for my long ride, Johnson accompanied me as far as the nearest township, beguiling the way with good advice. One of his principal injunctions was to return to England as soon as possible. I am bound to say I think, on the whole, he was right.

Now this account may have been monotonous, but it is as well, in these days of impecuniosity, with the question constantly dinned into our ears, 'What shall we do with our boys?' for 'our boys' to know what they may expect should they decide upon going to New Zealand.

It is true that half the young Englishmen who emigrate are received in some capacity on the larger sheep-runs, but how many rebel at being ordered about by men who, in point of education, are palpably their inferiors! how many think they would rather be captain of a small ship than boatswain of a large vessel! and with this idea in their heads, and a little capital in their pockets, they become 'Cockatoos.'

FUNERAL MARCH.

(CHOPIN.)

MEASURED are the paces
 Set for her to walk,
 Passed, the rows of faces,
 Spoken, all the talk.

Ended. Now thanksgiving
 For her journey done,
 For her span of living,
 Spent beneath the sun.

She was so sweet and tender,
 So fair on earth,
 No praises we could lend her,
 Can show her worth,
 How, from her birth
 To her last sun's setting
 And life's forgetting,

She brought flowers to deserts and plenty to dearth.
 And her soft eyes' glances,
 Ah me! ah me!
 Were the light that enhances
 The blue-rippled sea.

Tears! Tears!

Give me tears, all ye sounds, for the death of a singer,
 For her half-filled measure of years,
 For the pleasant paths where she might not linger.

FUNERAL MARCH.

Mighty art thou,
O Death !
We gaze upon thee
In thy majesty,
And marvel, with bated breath,
At the long straight line of thy plough,
Which turneth the earth in her season,
With a hopeless, divine unreason,
Furrowing straight through stubble and flower,
And the tender blade that a timeless shower
Gave to life in the hour of its death.

Measured are the paces
Set for her to walk,
Passed, the rows of faces,
Spoken, all the talk.

Ended. Now thanksgiving
For her journey done,
For her span of living,
Spent beneath the sun.

THE FIRST AND LAST PREACHER OF URORA.

‘HELLO! here comes the General.’

The speaker, Black Jake, was one of a small group of miners who were standing at the corner of the chief store in Urora.

Along the front of the store ran the following inscription in very big letters—LYNN C. DOYLE, DEALER IN GENERAL MERCHANDISE. No one knew what the owner’s real name was; it was hard to get at a man’s real name in those days in California; so the one on the inscription was accepted as genuine, and the proprietor familiarly known as ‘Linseed.’

On each side of this store was a smaller one; and exactly opposite, across the street (as the inhabitants rather boastingly termed it) stood the saloon, glorying in an immense sign and, in enormous letters, R. E. JOYCE, SALOON.

This little group, the stores and the saloon, formed the business part of Urora, the rest of the camp being made up of log huts thrown together in very temporary fashion and without any regard to streets or general convenience. A stranger would have found it quite impossible to discover any particular cabin without personally conducted assistance—a guide who would not desert him till he reached the very door. And as a matter of fact nearly every night some unfortunate, having imbibed too freely of Urora ‘tangle-foot,’ would exhaust himself in the hopeless endeavour to ‘spot’ his own abode, and finally, utterly lost and bewildered, take the ground for a floor, and heaven for a covering.

The chief source of wealth was the ‘lead’ struck by the General, which was currently believed to bring that gentleman in something like \$500 a day. This in itself was enough to make a flourishing little place, for the General spent, gambled, or gave away every dollar. He lived up to his income every day. He would draw straws with any one for \$100, or more; shake dice, play poker or high-card, or race beetles along the table to a lump of sugar, or, in fact, bet in *any* way to suit *any* comer. He was an old ‘49-er’ himself, well known at nearly all the mining camps in California, and liked by everyone, no matter whether he was in luck or out of it; a fine, powerfully-built man of about forty-five;

his bronzed face, scarred with many a deep line left by tough experience, setting off to great advantage his heavy, pure white moustache and thick iron-grey hair. His size and appearance, and his firm but always genial nature, had gained him the title of General, and now, as the leading man in Urora, everyone not only knew him and liked him, but looked up to him as the director-in-chief of the whole camp.

He came up to the group of miners by the store, and immediately struck into the conversation.

‘Say, boys, hev you seen the new Tenderfoot?’

‘No,’ said Jake with languid interest, and speaking for the others. ‘How long has he been in, and wot’s he like?’

‘Well, he’s just a kind of a fine-haired cuss—a gambler, or a devil-dodger, I reckon. But he ain’t got a gambler’s eye though, by wot I saw of him. Look here, Jake’—Jake was as desperate a gambler as the General himself, and the two seized every conceivable opportunity of indulging their propensity—‘I’m open ter bet he’s a preacher.’

‘I hain’t seen him,’ said Jake, ‘and I don’t see wot a preacher’s goin’ to do here, nor how he’s a-goin’ to make a livin’—and there ain’t no chickens here neither’—adding this last as a sort of afterthought, and a little reflectively.

‘Never mind about the chickens; no doubt if he can’t get on here he’ll move on agen—the question is, is he a preacher? Wot’ll you bet he ain’t?’

‘Fifty,’ said Jake promptly.

‘Make it a hundred.’

‘It’s a go.’

‘Come on across to Old Hank’s, then, and put up yer dust; come on, boys, it’s my treat. Hello! here’s the Tenderfoot himself. Come on, pardner, we want ter hev a talk with yer; come across with us and hev a drink,’ and he hooked himself on to the new-comer, and carried him across to the saloon with the others.

The saloon, as we have already said, was kept by Mr. R. E. Joyce, but Joyce (if that was really his name) was more commonly known as Old Hank, and Old Hank’s whiskey was allowed by all those people who had ever tried it to beat the record, and to be the worst in California. This was something to be proud of, for never was there such rank poison sold across any chemist’s counter as the ordinary miner’s whiskey. Many an old stager, who had sampled that drink at half the camps on the Slope, and who was

supposed to be utterly impervious to its effects, had to confess that Old Hank's was beyond him, and commencing afresh like any novice, would work at it slowly and cautiously for some little time before venturing on anything like an ordinary dose. It was variously called for as tangle-foot, snake-poison, forty-rod (it had the reputation of killing at that distance), chain-lightning, or other fancy name, but it was *never* called for as *whiskey*.

Old Hank drank it himself, and consequently suffered from (what he called) rheumatism. His general appearance was somewhat striking to a stranger; he walked with a limp, and one eye would always be very much swollen, while his upper lip generally projected fully half an inch beyond its natural position. But the queer thing about him was that sometimes one eye would be swollen, and sometimes the other; one day the right leg would be disabled, whilst the next day it would be the left leg that suffered, and an arm or so into the bargain, quite indiscriminately, so that the whole expression of the man's face and bearing would alter from day to day—such great effect did his own 'whiskey' have upon him. This eccentricity sold for him many an extra drink, for it was a regular thing with the miners to go down to the saloon of a morning and take a glass, just to see what new change and development might have come upon Old Hank during the night.

The General and his companions entered the well-known doors and walked up to the bar. Here the two principals, Jake and the General, each deposited his \$100 with Mr. Joyce (who on this occasion was found to be crippled in his right eye and leg, and his left arm), and then all hands were called upon to drink.

The interior of the saloon was spacious enough, and apparently built with a view to containing the entire population of Urora; this was in fact, no doubt, the main point (as regards the architecture of the building) in Mr. R. E. Joyce's eye when he fell to constructing it. The room contained two tables, one billiard, and one pool (now somewhat dilapidated), and on each wall hung a placard, 'DON'T SET ON THE TABLES.' At the far end was a rough but very practical bar reaching the entire breadth of the saloon, and having no visible outlet to the front. The wall behind it was decorated with rough chalk drawings of incidents in mining and cow-boy life, and among them hung the notice (in large letters), 'IN PROVIDENCE WE TRUST; all others cash.'

In response to the General's invitation everyone in the saloon

(some twelve or thirteen rough, unkempt-looking individuals) walked slowly up to the bar and leant against it.

‘Wot’s yur’s?’

‘Tangle-foot.’

‘And yur’s?’

‘Forty-rod.’

‘Yur’s?’

‘Chain-lightnin’.

And so on through the whole list. No two men apparently called for the same drink; and yet they all *meant* the same, and, in fact, could have obtained no other; for old Hank produced but one big bottle, and from that they all filled their glasses. The new ‘Tenderfoot’ alone did not come up.

‘Ain’t you goin’ ter drink with us, pardner?’

‘Thanks, but I hardly ever take anything.’

All eyes were at once turned towards him; to refuse to have a drink when called upon was generally considered worse than cattle-stealing. He was a small, thin, dark man, probably not more than thirty, and wearing a long and very loose-fitting, dark-coloured overcoat, and a dark slouched hat—evidently a man who had not been long West. His forehead was high and smooth, his hair straight and black, his eyes soft and irresolute. He stood with rather a frightened and timid air among all these rough, strong, weather-beaten miners; and, as he caught a somewhat unkindly and scornful expression on not a few of their faces (engendered of his refusal to drink with them), he looked, and perhaps for the moment felt, as a lamb among wolves.

‘If yer don’t care to drink with such a crowd,’ said the General, ‘d’yer mind just steppin’ up to the bar, anyway? It looks more decent, and we want ter ask yer a question or two.’

The stranger obeyed, and looked irresolutely about him.

‘Ain’t bin long West?’ queried the General.

‘About a month, sir.’

‘War’s yer home?’

‘Boston.’

‘Say, when yer wos back in the States yonder, did you ever do any preachin’?’

‘Do any preaching?’ said the stranger, as if startled.

‘Yes, preachin’!’

The young man paused before answering, and once more cast a somewhat furtive and irresolute look about him. He seemed to

notice that the men around him were awaiting his answer with some eagerness, and that many of them—his interrogator, at any rate—expected an answer in the affirmative.

‘Well, yes; I did sometimes,’ he allowed.

Old Hank handed over the stakes to the General. He pocketed them and turned to the young stranger in high good-humour.

‘It’s a long time since I heard any preachin’ done, and you’re the first one I’ve seen since I come out in ’49—least, you’re the first I’ve met with as ’ud own up to it. Shake. I like a preacher, providin’ he’s good along with it; and then preachin’ helps on the population, too. It’s a wonderful thing, boys, how religion helps on the population of a country.’ The General was speaking sententiously, and swirled his whiskey round in his glass by a meditative turn of the wrist. ‘I’ve seen it. I mind when I fust settled in Mosouri. In our settlement thar was some twenty-five or thirty women, and durned ef I believe thar was mor’n about three or four children between ’em. Wal’, after we’d bin there about two year, a preacher came along in the winter on circuit, and everybody got religion. That fall chickens was precious scarce, and eggs was high, but thar was more children in that settlement than you could shake a stick at. How’s that, pardner?’

‘I don’t know, sir, I’m sure,’ said the stranger, for the General had suddenly addressed himself to him.

‘Don’t *sir* me! don’t you know my name?’

‘I am afraid I—I *don’t*,’ said the young man rather timidly.

‘It’s no wonder,’ said the General good-humouredly; ‘fer it’s a *hard* one—it’s a hard one to pronounce, and a hard one to remember. I’ll bet you never heard a harder one.’

‘Mine is a hard one though, too,’ said the young stranger, trying to keep the General company in the conversation, ‘harder than yours I should think.’

‘How much have you got to bet on that, young man,’ said the General promptly—‘a hundred dollars?’

‘Oh, it’s against my principles to bet,’ said the other, drawing back.

‘Never mind, go agen’ yer principles for once; hev’ yer got the money?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then put it down. We’ll each write our names and hand ’em in with the stakes to Old Hank.’ It seemed to be part of Old

Hank's functions in Urora, to hold the General's stakes as occasion required.

The 'tender-foot' counted out his money. Mr. Joyce supplied him with a label to write his name on (on one side of it was the inscription 'Fine Old Rye Whiskey,' which was the well-sounding title which Old Hank was wont to affix to his bottles of 'chain-lightning'). He looked timidly round and then withdrew to the wall and wrote against it with his back to the company.

He was perhaps not aware of the fact, but he had risen quite 50 per cent. in the estimation of Urora.

Both men, having written on their labels and then handed them in, neatly rolled up, together with their stakes to old Hank, that worthy (a twinkle in his left eye—the 'to-day' one) slowly unrolled and read out the first name—'General Flint.' A snigger went round; the General had 'caught on.'

'Is your'n harder than that?' said Black Jake triumphantly to the stranger.

'It *is* harder,' said the other simply enough, and in corroboration of his words Mr. Joyce at the same moment, having unrolled the second label, read out 'John Harder,' and at once passed over the stakes to the said John, who pocketed them with unaffected pleasure.

'Jack,' said the General, looking at him with rising satisfaction, 'you're a better one than I thought you was. You're a good one, and yuv got it on ter me. Boys, I tell yer, don't you never think that you can down a preacher—they're slick ones, they are. Give me some of the old "stand-by," Hank. Here's how, Jack, and welcome to Urora.'

Jack's quiet and inoffensive manner soon made him popular. It was almost as though a woman had come into the place. He was looked upon as the General's especial *protégé*, and for some little time conversation in Urora turned on preachers and their ways and doings—such conversation, it must be confessed, being generally not very complimentary to John Harder's class.

'They're slick ones, they are,' said a big, red-bearded miner that same afternoon, leaning over the bar as usual, in company with several friends; 'I've travelled consider'ble on this side o' the mountains and on t'other, and I've been clear down south to the Gulf of Mexico, and I've never met a man yet as allowed he'd ever got it on ter a preacher. When I was a lad I used to think they wos all meek and kind of sawny, but sence then I've noticed

'em closer, and thar ain't no slicker class on earth. I'll tell yer what fust called my attention to it—he had got the same meditative swirl of the whiskey in his glass which was so favourite a concomitant of the General's conversation. 'I was in Mosouri in those days. Wal, thar was a poor blind and deaf cripple who used ter come every mornin' and play an old hurdy-gurdy on the steps o' the First National Bank. He would strap his instrument onter the railin' and set on the bottom step and play; he seemed ter ha' learnt (p'raps before he got deaf) how many turns o' the crank it tuk to a tune. Wal, he'd wind out a tune, and then rest awhile, and maybe drop off ter sleep for a bit, wake up agen, grab the handle, and grind out another tune, and so on. I've stood and watched him, and durned ef he ever made one turn too many. Wal, I was standin' one day countin' the revolutions while he wound out his tune. Then he leaned back and dropped off ter sleep; it was then that I seen a preacher spring on him a little bit the slickest trick I ever seen, and away the meanest. A man came up the street carryin' a churn. Thinks I, "Wot's that preacher" (for he had a black coat on in the summer time) "goin' ter do with that there churn?" But I soon found out. He walked up ter the railin', unstrapped the hurdy-gurdy, strapped the churn in its place (handle next the cripple), then givin' a little pull at one o' the man's feet ter wake him up, went back home agen. The cripple woke up, grabbed the handle, and wound out the "Old Hundredth" and "Hail Columbia," as he thought, and another one or two besides, and the butter must ha' come nicely by that time. I waited. I thought the preacher was only kind o' hirin' the fellow, like, and 'ud give 'im mebbe half a dollar or so if the butter was satisfactory. I must ha' waited some twenty minutes. Back come Mr. preacher and put a coin into the fellow's hand, and while he wos feelin' round the edge to see if it was somethin' or nothin', replaced the hurdy-gurdy and went off with his butter. I saw a kind o' disappointed look on the poor cripple's face, so I walked up ter see wot the preacher had giv' him; boys, 'twas nothing but a brass pool-check.'

He paused to empty his glass, and Black Jake struck in.

'Preachers ain't only slick, they're the luckiest mortals livin'! Why, back East the railroads carries 'em free. Did you ever know one as didn't marry enough money to make him independently rich? They hev their pick of all the gals in their settlement, and they ain't no fools. Talk o' luck!—I knew one of 'em in

Saint Joe; he was walkin' along one dark night, and fell down through an open sewer-gratin'——'

'Not much luck about *that*.'

'Wait a minute. Well, when we pulled him out——'

'He was pizened?'

'No, he warn't. Well, when we——'

'Suffocated?'

'No, he warn't, I'm telling yer. Well, as I was sayin', when we pulled him out, durn my hide if he hadn't found a gold watch and chain!'

'Good enough!' said the General.'

It was generally conceded that preachers *were* the luckiest set of men living. But these small conversations about the class in general did not interfere with the Rev. John Harder's personal popularity. It was arranged (chiefly by the General) that on the following Sunday there should be a 'revival meeting.' As the General himself expressed it, 'It'll be a little bit rocky on some of us, but Urora's gettin' to be quite a place, and ef thar's ter be any preachin' done, Jack's the man ter snatch it bald-headed.' So it was settled.

There were two difficulties. One—when was Sunday? This was ascertained by reckoning from the last mail-day. The other—where was the meeting to be held? Everyone was sure to come, and the saloon was the only place big enough to hold them all; the tables could be turned out, and the place cleared and cleaned—so it was decided to hold the meeting there. A notice to that effect was stuck on the door, and ran as follows:—

'There will be a prayer-meeting held *HERE* next Sunday. Sunday is the day after termorrer. And a colleckshun to build a sootible meeting-room. *Everybody come a-runnin'!*'

Sunday came round in due course. The tables had been turned out, and in their place were arranged all the available chairs and benches of Urora; the bar was covered with the table-covers, and every trace of the saloon eradicated. Old Hank covered over a part of the large notice at the back of the bar, and left visible only the first half of it—

IN PROVIDENCE WE TRUST.

Everyone attended, and the variety of costume displayed could only be equalled at a nigger camp-meeting—the professional

gamblers, however, being easily distinguishable from all others by reason of their boots being polished; they were, in Urora as in most other mining camps, the only persons possessed of shoe-blacking. The General acted as deacon.

The Rev. John Harder—a curious thing in a preacher—had neither Bible nor Prayer Book. But he had drawn up a sufficiently substantial form of prayer, and his simple and somewhat timid delivery, among all those rough men, made a deeper impression than a bolder style might have done. Never were prayers offered to better ends, or responded to with greater sincerity by a congregation. As he read on, a pin might have been heard to drop, and more than one tough and hoary-headed sinner was visibly touched. There was no sermon, properly so called, but a short and simple address. Then came the collection—the General handed round a ten-pound salt-sack. He made a good and solemn deacon (even to placing the left hand in the small of his back) as he went round—not many men could take up a collection in a salt-sack with becoming solemnity—until he came to Black Jake, who was empty-handed. He stood holding the sack before him for a minute, but Jake still showed no sign of going to his pocket. He danced the sack up and down before his eyes, but without effect. At length he broke out from his diaconal constraint, and whispered eagerly.

‘I’ll shake yer ter see who puts in fifty.’

Jake nodding assent, the General produced a dice-box, and shook first—(on the bench)—three aces.

Jake—three fives (a horse on Jake).

Second shake. *General*—four deuces.

Jake—five treys (a horse apiece).

Third and final. *General*—an ace full, on fives.

Jake—six full, on aces (on Jake).

‘Put the fifty in for me, General; that hundred yer won was my last. I’ll pay yer back in a day or two.’

‘I’ll raise it fifty,’ and the salt-sack received \$100.

For an hour or so after the meeting had broken up, there was a sort of sanctified expression about Urora. There was not that blue vapour round the saloon which was wont to curl out of its door and its windows at ordinary times. Even ‘Texas’ had not not yet called for a drink. But presently old Hank gravely rearranged his place. The pool and billiard-tables were set back in their old positions; soon the click of the balls was wafted through

the open door, and the old familiar sound of the wheel of fortune greeted the ears of the loafers outside.

Click, click, click. 'Let 'er role, let 'er role, let 'er r-o-l-e'—whirr-r-r-. 'The little horse, and let 'er role—sixteen and a red'—whirr-r-r-r-r-r-r. 'Lone star, and let 'er role, let 'er role, let 'er r-o-l-e ' Urora had returned to its normal condition, only perhaps a little more so than usual, as the day had been made a general holiday.

It was night, and the lamps were lighted when the Rev. John Harder put in his head at the door of the saloon. When the meeting had broken up that morning, the General had taken him outside, and there solemnly handed over to his safe custody the proceeds of the collection—quite a considerable sum—with the understanding that the site and general plan of the proposed meeting-house should be presently discussed by a committee of the inhabitants of the camp. In the meantime he was to take care of the money; he had taken it down to the cabin which the camp had already provided for 'the preacher,' and had not been seen during the latter part of the day. Now, he came and looked into the saloon as if in search of some one—probably the General, his patron and protector.

Inside the saloon some were gambling, some drinking, others playing billiards, and there were about fourteen in a game of pool; and when he came in he was at once invited to drink. The invitation was a pressing one, for all men just then were friendly-disposed to the young preacher, and were anxious to make him feel comfortable and at home in their rough society; and it was therefore to the huge delight of his would-be entertainer that he assented and came up to the bar. He was nervous—perhaps more nervous than usual—but the old timid and crushed air was fast giving way to a new development; he bore himself more confidently and with a certain suspicion of *swagger*, born, no doubt, of that bag of money—the fruits of the morning's collection—that was now in his possession. He called for a 'cock-tail.' Perhaps old Hank didn't rightly understand him; perhaps he interpreted it as just a new fancy name for that same old spurious whiskey; at any rate, he only put out a glass and the 'tangle-foot' bottle. Harder hesitated; but the choice lay between drinking and affronting the new friends whom he seemed more desirous than usual of conciliating. He took the drink.

The miners around him were delighted, and slapped him

jovially on the back as he spluttered over the first draught. And when that first glass was finished, extra pressure was put upon him to take another. He was not at all himself, but seemed to be under the influence of some suppressed emotion; and now and again he furtively put his hand into his bosom and half-pulled out a letter, as if to make sure that he had it safe. And in his obvious anxiety to please his entertainers he took the second glass. Unfortunately for the poor preacher, the General was engaged in a game of poker, right away from the bar, and, with the gambling spirit in full swing, did not notice what was happening. Everyone was anxious to 'set 'em up' to the preacher, and presently he, too, began to 'set 'em up' in his turn.

The General's attention was not called to these proceedings until a very noticeable commotion arose by the bar.

'I'm the Boston Slogger—and I'll knock the saw-dust out of any two men in this hole of a place.'

It was the preacher's voice, wild and unsteady. The General stopped his game with a muttered oath, and came over. He saw at once how the case lay.

'Let the preacher alone,' he said, almost fiercely. 'Say, Jack, you'd better quit drinkin' for to-night, my boy.' But the persuasion was in vain. Harder was too far gone, and only offered to fight the General himself.

'Come outside,' said the miner, and taking him by the arm led him firmly, albeit very gently out of the saloon. Two or three loafers followed, but, once outside, the Rev. John had quite forgotten his intention of fighting. He burst out into hilarity at some unknown joke which he wished to communicate to those around him, concerning his name: that it was not 'Harder,' but 'Schnectal . . . airy' or some such word, and finally, after some incoherent attempt at explaining that he 'wasn't a preacher at all,' which was another joke in his possession, as it seemed, he staggered against his burly patron for support. The poor fellow was in a most discreditable plight, and the General felt it.

'Who is it,' he said, looking around, with more grief and wrath than anyone there had ever seen him display—'as has done this?'

No one answered for a moment; the men seemed a little bit abashed, and sorry that their well-meant hospitality had come to this. They felt that they had put their new 'preacher' in an unfortunate position as regarded his reputation in the camp. Then a murmur went round:

'Did it hisself, I reckon.'

The General tried to persuade the poor fellow to 'go home,' but he obstinately refused—his one idea was to drink or fight. A happy thought came to the General—outside the saloon was a hitching-post (where in the West is there a saloon without one?). This post was about 4 feet 6 inches high, and would just about fit inside the preacher's long loose coat. Suiting the action to the thought the General unbuttoned Harder's coat, and holding him tightly up against the post got one of the others to button it in. 'Leave him here for a time, and mebbe he'll get sobered up,' said the General, anxious to get back to his game; and the men went back into the saloon. The last that they saw of the weak, frail man buttoned up to the post, was his putting himself into a fighting attitude under the impression that he was about to 'go for' a circular saw (totally imaginary) which, he declared, was the only thing worth standing up to in the whole States.

The General returned to his game, and Jack was for the time forgotten. Presently sounds came to them of a soft voice trying to sing 'Ho! sweet Ho!' and a little later a few incoherent calls for 'Fanny,' and then a dead silence.

'Guess he don't feel much like fightin' a cirkilar saw now,' said the General, as Jake (who was winning) paid him back the fifty dollars borrowed that morning.

It was not until old Hank said, 'Gentlemen, I'm goin' to shet 'er down,' that anyone thought of going home. When the first men came out they were staggered by the sight in front of them. The preacher was standing bolt upright, his hat off, and head thrown back. The moon shone full upon his white, upturned face with its fringe of lank black hair, and gave it a most ghastly expression. General Flint walked up to him and gave him a little shake. 'How der yer seem to "stack up" now, Jack—der yer feel any better?' There was no reply. 'Boys, he looks mighty bad; we'd better carry him in.'

He was carried in and laid on the pool table, but showed no sign of life.

Working for the General was a young fellow who had been a medical student in Philadelphia. As he was not in the saloon, 'Texas' was despatched at once to fetch him, and in a few minutes he came.

'We've got a case fer yer at last, Doc.'

All gathered round the table to hear Doc's opinion—all but

four; and *they* were sitting in the corner playing a game of Euchre for high stakes, and could not leave their game.

'Doc' felt the pulse, opened one of the eyes, then, unbuttoning the neck, placed his hand over the patient's heart. There was a dead silence. Then 'Doc' took off his hat.

'Boys, he's a dead preacher.'

'Spades is trumps, boys.'

'We only want one, pardner; give us yer best, and I'll play it alone. Joker and both Bowers, yer can't beat that, and it's our game. Let's go and see wot the fun is;' and so the four gamblers joined the rest.

It is a strange law of nature that the strong and rough should always take to the frail and weak. It seemed to be so now. All were silent and appeared touched. This was not the first time that there had been a corpse laid out upon this very table, but then as one after the other came into the saloon he would walk up to look, and merely saying '*He's a stiff'un,*' or '*He ain't in no trance,*' would go to the bar and take a drink. But *this* one had been so timid, so inoffensive; and perhaps too there was a certain mystery about his end; generally, if a death occurred at Urora, it was a case of a man being shot down, or carved up in the presence of perhaps one or more eye-witnesses—but *here*—it was as if he had been stricken down by some hidden hand. And perhaps, too, some of them were a little bit pricked in what small remnant of conscience they might still have kept within them. They may, or they may not, have heard of the fable of the dwarf who essayed to go with the giants; but it doubtless struck them, that in making him their boon companion over old Hank's 'snake-poison,' in pressing him to drink so obviously to his damage, they had played it rather low down on the preacher.

The General was the first to speak. 'There's bin some died here afore. But we always knowed either how it was done, or else who done it. Boys, the case 'pears to me ter need an inques'; let's carry him over ter the store.'

A door was soon procured, and the body laid upon it and taken over to the store, and there placed upon two sugar-barrels. The General picked out twelve men for a jury. All the rest waited solemnly in the saloon. After some twenty minutes the jury returned.

'Well, wot's the verdict?'

The General took off his hat, and spoke softly. 'Gentlemen,

he's fooled us—he's played it on us—it's a "horse" on us, but the game's on *him*. Here's yer hundred dollars back agen, Jake; he warn't n' more a preacher than any of us. Durned ef he didn't spring that Harder racket on me, too, pretty slick—when his name's somethin' else all the time; but it ain't fer the like's of us ter judge him—thar ain't none of us come ter Californy fer our health, I reckon, and p'raps he war as good a man as any in Urora; though his actions don't appear ter hev bin jest wot yer mought call hon'able. But I've swore ter be his friend; I sort o' took a likin' tu him; and his friend I am, till the Pit freezes over. That's so. Well, boys, we searched him, thinkin' we mought find out where he come from, and wot his right name mought be, and here's all we found—a letter to a gal—he'd just scribbled it rough-like. Here it is:—

"Urora, Oct. 8, '61.

"My own sweet Fanny, my darling Fanny,—I've struck oil, I've struck oil! This very morning I have made more than \$600—and how do you think? Preaching, preaching! I am almost beside myself with joy as I write this, because I hope in a very few days to be beside *you*. I have enough money now, altogether, to buy up that drug store of Smith's, at the corner of 7th and Fth Streets, so we shall be able to set up housekeeping at once. So be ready. The people here are very wild and rough, and I shall be very glad to get away from them; but they have treated me very kindly. They have made two great mistakes—they think I am 'a preacher' (as they call it). I don't know how they got that idea, but it has brought me in good luck; and they think my name is John Harder! They would be terribly surprised if they knew they were mistaken, and that I was going to set up a drug store under a totally different name. But I shall leave them in blissful ignorance. You will not have long to wait; only a few days after you receive this I shall be with you, and then . . . !

"Your ever loving and true

"JACK."

It was the letter at which the (now deceased) man had so furtively peeped two or three times, while drinking with the miners; he must have written it that afternoon, after the General had handed over to him the collection for building the meeting-room.

General Flint's voice grew even softer as he continuéd—

'His ways warn't, mebbe, jest as smooth as they should ha' bin', but it warn't altogether a bad man as wrote that letter. He was kinder too gentle to live along of *us*; p'raps he didn't jest understand us properly. And then he wanted to git on home as quick as he could to that gal Fanny. So he tried to make his money a trifle faster, no doubt, than what he should ha' done. Boys, if he had lived two days longer, he would ha' bin out of this yer camp with that money that he got for our meetin'-room and for that sham name of his. So, as he has had to go wi'out it, everybody will jest git his own back agen—we've bin fooled, that's all. And I'll see he's buried decent. Wot will yer have, boys? fill 'em up, Hank, and let us drink "Heaven have mercy on 'im." He was true to Fanny, and that's nine-tenths of the law and the prophets in Californy.'

All solemnly drank the toast, and then Old Hank spoke.

'Say, Gen'ral, what was the verdie?'

'Ah, gentlemen, I had nigh forgot it. We magnanimously agreed about it, but it was rather an open one. We came to the conclusion that *Hank's chain-lightning downed him!*'

The General was as good as his word. He had the dead man buried decently, and sent into Sacramento for a suitable head-stone, and caused an inscription to be cut upon it:—

HERE LIES JOHN ?

THE FIRST PREACHER [?]

OF URORA.

HANK'S CHAIN-LIGHTNING DOWNED HIM

October 8, 1861.

The grave is there on the solitude of the mountain-slope, and round about it the coyote howls, and the eagle clangs, and by night the mountain-lion cries.

The solitude of the mountain-slope; for the General's 'lead' proved to be only a 'pocket.' *Urora fuit*—Urora vanished—and all that place is now desolate, and far from human haunts and the voices of men.

The General, hoping cheerily against hope, was the last man to leave; and before he went, he visited the grave and roughly

carved two additional words upon the stone. When he had done, the second and third lines of the inscription read as follows:—

AND LAST
THE FIRST PREACHER [?]
OF URORA.

‘I don’t like that first line,’ he said to himself, surveying his handiwork with a sigh; ‘but I don’t know wot his name was—so how can I put it? He said at first, *Harder*; but he owns hisself as *that* ain’t right. And then he said *Schnecktel*——*airy*, but he wos drunk, so who’s ter know. Guess I’d better leave it as it is. But it’s a good thing I got this yer tombstone when I did; if I’d waited till yesterday, that order on the bank that I paid for it with wouldn’t ha’ bin worth a wooden hoop in Hades.’

And in another moment he, too, was gone—away towards the setting sun.

And he spread through all that section yet another name for whiskey—‘Kill Preacher.’

‘PICKWICK.’

THIS cheerful and inspiring work, which of all modern inventions has most increased the gaiety of nations and public stock of harmless pleasure, appeared some fifty years ago, and its ‘Jubilee’ has been fitly celebrated by a sumptuous edition enriched with ‘extra’ illustrations, and notes explaining its history. This is a tribute almost of affection; and any fresh information about its favourite characters is welcomed, much as new biographical details concerning some popular favourite are received. During the last half-century much relating to the composition of the immortal book, the allusions, the personal connection of the author and of all concerned, has been greedily sought for and gathered; the work itself has come to be treated as a classic, and laborious persons are already exhausting themselves in commentaries, collections, and ‘dry-as-dust’ business.¹ None are so interested as the booksellers, and a standing entry in every catalogue is a column or so of ‘Pickwicks.’ An ‘original’ ‘Pickwick’ is a very precious thing; but to secure a perfect ‘Pickwick,’ with all the necessary ‘points,’ needs an education. First of all, it must be arrayed in its green cover with the advertisements; the value of the green cover being that it proves the ‘sporting’ complexion which it was at first intended to impart to the narrative. The title set out ‘a record of the perambulations, perils, travels, adventures, and sporting transactions of the corresponding members.’ On each side is a sporting trophy, composed of fishing-rods, landing-nets, guns, whips, &c. At the top a solitary fowler is seen discharging his piece at a bird; while below there is a large sketch of Mr. Pickwick seated fast asleep in a punt, his fishing-line strained tight by a disregarded fish. As is well known this special character of the story was discarded almost at the outset.

A proper ‘Pickwick,’ therefore, should have this important green cover bound up with it. It is also *de rigueur* to possess the various classes of illustrations. First, those by Seymour, who

¹ Mr. Kitton’s work in this direction is well known, and in an entertaining article recently published he has furnished some curious information as to the originals of Dickens’s characters.

committed suicide after the second number had appeared, and was succeeded by a forgotten artist named Buss, also tried and found unsuited. Buss's plates are feeble to a degree, a result owing to the fact that he attempted to etch his drawings without any knowledge of the technique of etching. He had, moreover, little or no humour. His plates were accordingly 'suppressed' and his place taken by the versatile Phiz. Thus, fortunate are those who have the 'two suppressed plates' by Buss, which should be 'inserted in Part V.,' in company with the two substituted ones of Phiz. There was further a plate of Seymour's with which Dickens was dissatisfied, and which in courteous terms he begged of him to redraw. This, it may be said, is all but *introuvable*, and, if secured, enriches our copy prodigiously. The 'scarce addresses found in Parts X. and XV., and so often wanting,' should also be secured. During fifty years, all these plates, in spite of renewals, redrawings, and other repairs, have become so worn and blurred, that it becomes of the first importance to secure early impressions. The last word, however, is spoken in the sumptuous monument just issued, which for paper, print, notes, and every adornment, is one of the finest works ever sent from the press.

In the marvellous 'Pickwick' panorama, the work of a young man of twenty, there are some seventy characters, all round, clearly drawn, original, and distinct. Of these about twenty are working performers, as they may be called, who carry the piece regularly through, and appear in all the acts. These are Mr. Pickwick, and his three friends, Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass; Wardle, his daughter Emily, and the 'Fat Boy'; Jingle and Job Trotter; Ben Allen and Arabella; Bob Sawyer, Perker, with Lowten his clerk; the two Wellers, and Mary the pretty housemaid; Stiggins and Mrs. Weller. In addition there are fifty and more minor figures, who appear little more than once, and then go their way. This amusing miscellany is marshalled without confusion or crowding, and furnishes entertainment to the close. We have only to recall the list and marvel at the author's power of gay invention. There are Dr. Slammer, Dr. Payne, and the widow; the dockyard magnates; Mr. and Mrs. Pott, Slurk, the Leo Hunters, and Count Smoltork; the spinster aunt and her mother, the 'long gamekeeper,' Magnus, Miss Withersfield, and Dowler. Then the characters of the Fleet, Roker, Mivins, Smangle, the Cobbler, the Butcher, Parson, &c.; the M.C. at Bath, with Lord Muttinhead,

the card-playing ladies, and the immortal 'Bath footmen'; Nupkins the Mayor, and his servant Muzzle; the constable Grummer, Dodson & Fogg and their clerks; the attorney Pell, Justice Stareleigh, Serjeants Buzfuz and Snubbin, with the other barristers; the chemist-juryman; Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Rogers and old Winkle; to say nothing of a crowd of inferior characters who appear but for a few moments, but who serve their purpose, helping on the story and amusing the reader.

The figures of Mr. Pickwick and his party are known wherever an English story is read. One of the firm of Chapman & Hall claims to have suggested a counterfeit presentment for the founder of the club. A more artistic and suitable character for suggesting and provoking situations could not have been devised. A set of small apostle spoons ornamented with Pickwick figures were fiercely contended for at the Dickens sale, and we recall the triumph with which the late Andrew Halliday, one of the master's own merry men, displayed to us a single spoon which he had secured for the fancy price of some twenty odd pounds. No 'Arry is complete without his 'penny Pickwick' o' holidays; and the Christmas-trees in Germany and elsewhere are hung with Wellers, Winkles, &c. in their habits as they are etched. Innumerable reams of paper are daily blotted by Pickwick pens. The fund of happy and ready quotations has been amply enriched by points and allusions from the same story, the most useful and humorous being that of 'the Pickwickian sense,' which removes all offence from an offensive speech. It was Mr. Carlyle who reported the significant speech of the sick man wearied out with his doctor's inquiries, 'Well! "Pickwick" will be out to-morrow, anyhow.' Even now we can hardly realise the enthusiasm and delight with which each number was looked for. There were Pickwick chintzes, 'Weller corduroys,' Pickwick cabs, canes, pencil-cases, gaiters. It was translated not only into French, Italian, Spanish, and German, but into Russian, Norwegian, Danish, Polish, and other such uncongenial tongues. Rarely has there been such a triumph. The sale of this extraordinary work has never flagged during fifty years, and we are told that hundreds of thousands of copies have been disposed of by a single firm. It is to be had for sixpence, and, we believe, was selling some time ago on costermongers' carts for *one penny*, complete and unabridged! It has, of course, been dramatised, like all Dickens's stories, and there was a Strand actor named Wilkinson who made a reputation in the

difficult character of Sam Weller. Mr. Irving is fond of playing Jingle, but the adaptation he has chosen is poorly constructed, and his rendering of the adventurer is somewhat farcical. The most telling scenes, such as the ball at the hotel and the quarrel with Dr. Slammer, are left out. It has also been treated as an opera. Of the 'trial scene' half a dozen different versions are in favour, of which at least three are fitted with songs and music, thus anticipating that ingenious pair who wrote 'Trial by Jury.'

The late Mr. Forster, who was the last of the old well-grounded school of critics, and who had a personal share in the engendering of Dickens's writings, did not rate 'Pickwick' so highly as its successors. While sharing the general admiration for its humour, spirit, and characters, he held that in form and treatment it fell short of the higher standard. The same excellent judge was often heard to say that later generations of readers would not have time to get through 'Bleak House,' 'Our Mutual Friend,' and other works of the author's later manner, and there can be little doubt that the tragic or serious portions of these productions are slow and laboured reading enough. Too much is strained and forced, the dialogue is unnatural and inconsistent, and the incidents ordinary, though 'led up to,' as to some extraordinary and unexpected solution. The wish was indeed often expressed, 'Why not write us another "Pickwick?"' to which only a writer of experience could give an answer. The novelist is passive, and can only write as he is inspired, or has material. Had he yielded to this pressure there would have been a second 'Pickwick' indeed, but only a replica or imitation of the first.

There is one form of mechanism in the management of his story for which the author had a strong *penchant*, the introduction of an occasional tale. This was too often contrived *à propos de bottes*. A coach is upset in the snow, and the travellers have to sit round the inn fire; or Mr. Pickwick opens a drawer as he is going to bed and finds a MS.; or in the commercial room someone relates a 'Bagman's Tale,' or there is 'A Stroller's Story.' Through the course of 'Pickwick' we meet no less than a dozen of these tales. One is inclined to suspect that they were unused magazine stories lying by the author, with which he filled in his number, if time failed or inspiration flagged. But the truth is, Dickens always keenly hankered after this old-fashioned device. He had nearly shipwrecked 'Master Humphrey's Clock' by making it a sort of miscellany for short stories; and in the

numerous 'Christmas Numbers' of 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round' he reverted to his pet idea, and showed much ingenuity in devising machinery or 'framework' for the same purpose. Some of the 'Pickwick' stories, however, we would not willingly part with, notably the ghostly mail coach legend, which is highly original, and even in a sort of keeping with the narrative.

It has often been a subject of speculation where was obtained the peculiar style and treatment of this famous narrative. In the same generation there is no other work of the same literary cast, in this respect being like 'Waverley' and 'Vanity Fair,' which were originals. Only one or two works could be named which preceded 'Pickwick' and which can be at all compared with it in character—viz. some of Theodore Hook's, and Poole's 'Little Pedlington,' which in its own limited way is a masterpiece. It is curious also to note the narrow escape we have had of complete failure owing to the adoption of a false style, drawn from the pedantic humour of the 'Sketches by "Boz,"' which was indeed the established magazine treatment of the time. This, a kind of subdued burlesque, aimed at the description of serious matter in a tone of mock gravity, which after a time became fatiguing. The account of the club discussion at the opening is conceived in this 'forced' manner, a good illustration of which is the conceit of the letters 'C.M.P.C.' put after every name, and explained in a note to mean 'Corresponding Member of the Pickwick Club.' This was thought to be highly humorous. So with the rather stilted headings of the chapters, such as, '*How the Pickwickians made and cultivated the acquaintance of a couple of nice young men belonging to one of the Liberal Professions, &c;*;' while another chapter, '*Records a touching act of delicate feeling, achieved and performed by Messrs. Dodson and Fogg,*' all which has a laboured air. Mr. Pickwick in the debate exhibits himself in quite a different character, being tart and aggressive, and showing none of the amiability, which he would have done later in the story. Indeed it is clear that the antiquarian element was an inconsistency. The 'Bill Stumps, his mark' incident was broad and inartistic, and, as everyone will recall, was treated in a truer comedy spirit in the 'Antiquary.' But of these pedantic fetters our author speedily shook himself free, leaving it to Mr. Albert Smith and others of his imitators.

We are lost in amazement at the spirit and inspiration of the dialogues—often conceived in the best spirit of old comedy. There

is the spontaneousness of real life—with no surplusage. So buoyant and even tumultuous is the spirit in which the story is carried on, that the author often falls into some curious mistakes and incongruities, which, according to the old stage phrase, he 'bustles' through by sheer force of good spirits. An odd mistake at the outset is Jingle's account of what he witnessed during the 'three glorious days' of 1830, though he relates the incident in the year 1827. This, however, the author himself points out in a burlesque note, but it seems strange that he did not correct the mistake in the next edition. Again, when Mr. Pickwick took out the Legend of Prince Bladud, to read before going to bed, we are told expressly 'he lighted his bedroom candle, that it might burn up well by the time he finished'—odd evidence, by the way, of the inferior chandlery of the day—but when, with many yawns, and 'a countenance expressive of the utmost weariness,' he had got to the end of the story, 'he lighted his chamber candle,' already, as we were told, alight. In the obstreperous scene at Bath, when Mr. Winkle, in his dressing-gown, was shut out into the street, the landlady had seen from the drawing-room window Mr. Winkle 'bolt' into Mrs. Dowler's sedan chair. She then rushes to call Mr. Dowler, shrieking 'that his wife was running away.' Now that gentleman had to come from his bedroom, throw up the window, yet 'the first object that met his gaze was Mr. Winkle bolting into the sedan chair.' Another singular incident for which no explanation can be given was the conveying of Mrs. Cluppins with Mrs. Bardell to the Fleet prison and the locking her up; for on this lady Messrs. Dodson & Fogg had no claim whatever, and they left the other members of the party, such as Mrs. Rogers, unmolested. Mrs. Cluppins would have had good grounds for an action against those astute gentlemen.

No part of the story is more effective and vivacious than the scenes at Rochester and Chatham. The very flavour of these places is caught. The local ball at the inn is delightful for its dramatic spirit and variety. The youthful and brilliant writer had taken stock of the manners and society of the place where he had been a boy, and, from what we know of one specimen, it is likely that all the characters were drawn from life. Slammer, the 'peppery' doctor, was taken from a Dr. Sam Piper, whom an old friend and brother officer describes as 'a worthy, honest, single-minded man of the old school, given to swearing and other peculiarities, and was one of the "characters" of Chatham upon my

first going there in 1836. He belonged to the Provisional Battalion of Chatham in days long ago. Upon the occasion of "Pickwick's" being published, and the mentioning the Rochester Ball, with Slammer's name, the latter, in the first instance, "naturally" thought of calling out the author, and, on second thoughts, of prosecuting him for libel. His true friends, however, strongly advised against this step.'

Looking over some papers lately, one of these gentlemen found a letter of his ancient comrade, which is quite in the 'Slammer' style:

'New Hill: March 17, '58.

'You, the two undermentioned officers, are hereby required to attend at my house, to-morrow, Thursday, at six o'clock, to meet only Dr. and Mrs. —, also to masticate and wash down your food with good and wholesome wine. In neglect of, or disobeying, this order, you are liable to be sworn at.

'Gentlemen,

'Yours sincerely,

'SAM PIPER.'¹

The secret of this vivacity is found in the fact that it was written in a single heat, as it were, and in one night—as will be seen from one of his letters. The publishers were coming in the morning for copy, and he had 'only got Mr. Pickwick and his friends in the Rochester coach with a new character who he expected would "make a hit." This was Jingle, who with his servant, Job, was clearly suggested by Robert Macaire and Jacques Strop, played in London the year before.

In truth, Dickens's knowledge of Rochester and Chatham was 'extensive and peculiar,' like his own Sam's of London. Often, walking with him along the pleasant road leading to these towns, we have heard him dwell on the sense of awe with which the modest buildings of the place used to affect him, and his astonishment on returning in later years to find them of such dwindled proportions.

The ever popular Sam Weller, it has been said, is not an original, and there can be no doubt there was a popular actor, *tempore* Pickwick, named Sam Vale, who performed one Simon Splatdash. All his speeches were larded with the illustrations that the Pickwickian servant was so partial to. "Come on,"

¹ We are indebted for this characteristic illustration to General Kent, a friend of the genial novelist's.

as the man said to the right boot,' &c., was a specimen. The similitude of the two names is curious. Later, Dickens was intimate with a family of the name of Weller, one of whom became the mother of Miss Thompson, the artist. The name is particularly associated with Dorking, where, it will be recollected, was Mr. Weller, senior's, inn, 'The Markis of Granby.' On a recent visit, we noticed the name Weller on several houses, as also that of Sawyer. The town is full of inns, and visitors are sure to note those old, crusted, full-flavoured hostelries, the 'White Horse' and the 'Red Lion,' with another opposite—all three still claiming to be the one figured in the story. But the Weller inn is described as having its sign on the opposite side of the road, which proves that it could not have been in the main street, where there are houses on both sides, and, indeed, it is plain that Mr. Weller's house had not the pretensions of the 'White Horse' or 'Red Lion.' A few hundred yards out of the town, on the London road, there is found a roadside inn, which our author had probably in his eye.

The scene where Sam is writing his valentine under the easy criticism of his father, suggests the well-known one in 'The Rivals,' where Acres is writing his challenge. Actors always introduce a 'gag' which they may have borrowed from Mr. Weller; 'addressing the same lady' being *malaproped* into 'undressing.' We have the same idea in Sam's letter. 'I feel myself ashamed, and completely circumscribed in a dressin' of you.' Sam's curious story of the patient who 'blew his head off' by eating crumpets was a grotesque variation of one related in Boswell's Johnson, where the patient fancied 'buttered muffins.' A careful study of this admirably drawn character will show that at the opening the author had not quite grasped its capabilities. It was only after two or three numbers' progress that he found himself developing his happy varieties of humour and illustration, which ripened as he went along. Sam at the 'Old White Hart' was rather a flippant and even uncongenial person, and his answers pert rather than humorous. We wonder, too, how the son of the proprietor of a flourishing inn, and so superior in his gifts, should have found himself reduced so low as to accept the post of 'boots' in a borough inn. But it is likely that Weller, senior, his inn, and his widow were afterthoughts suggested by Sam's successful development.

In a conversation with his father, Sam Weller accuses him of

'prophesying away like a red-faced Nixon,' which provokes Mr. Weller. 'Who was he?' he asks, and is answered, without much filial feeling: 'Never mind who he was—he wasn't a coachman, that's enough for you.' This 'red-faced Nixon' always seemed a mysterious allusion enough; but lately, in a bookseller's catalogue, we came upon the following, which explains it: 'Nixon's Cheshire Prophecy, with the prophecy at large. Coloured folding frontispiece representing Nixon'—probably with 'a dab' of carmine on his cheeks.

Count Smorltork, one of Mrs. Leo Hunter's guests, is exquisitely drawn in a few touches, and the dialogue between him and Mr. Pickwick is simply perfect in its appropriateness and humour—as his reply to the former's courteous remark: 'Politics comprises in itself a subject of no inconsiderable magnitude,' 'Politic surprises in himself, ver good.' This foreigner was clearly modelled from Prince Puckler-Muskau, who was then, or recently, 'doing' England in a hurry, and taking notes of his travels.

At this period, Dickens mostly took his names from real life, as having a greater air of *vraisemblance*. He had not as yet adopted the system of compounding strangely fantastic names. Pickwick was a well-known coach proprietor. The passage in which Sam points out to his master that his name had been taken and put on the coach door looks like some pleasant chaffing of the coach proprietor, who, galled by the perpetual jest on his name and person, may have made a remonstrance. Not long ago, in one of the Courts, a witness appeared bearing this very name, who declared himself to be a descendant of the original Moses Pickwick; and, to add to the piquancy of the situation, he was examined by Mr. H. Dickens, the novelist's son—a clever and flourishing barrister. On the other hand, a small town, the last stage before arriving at Bath, is called Pickwick. It is said, too, that there is a character of the name in one of Pierce Egan's novels. The widow of the unfortunate Seymour put forth a pamphlet, claiming the credit of the conception for her husband. The names of Dodson and Fogg we lately found in an old 'Life of "Orator" Hunt,' one syllable being altered. Wardle, Lowten, Dowler, and some other names are found together in the report of the Duke of York's case. Keen as is the enjoyment which the celebrated 'trial' excites, no one but a barrister can perfectly appreciate its exquisite satire. This is not strained or far-fetched, is founded on true professional knowledge, and yet all the while there is not the least

air of technical allusion. It would be vain to praise the immortal speech of the Serjeant, which is no exaggeration, and has been delivered again and again by learned counsel in similar cases. One of the most delicate strokes is that of the bill, 'Lodgings for single gentlemen,' with the juryman's question, 'There is no date to the document?' and the Serjeant's answer, 'There is no date, gentlemen, but I am instructed that it was put up,' &c. So with Sam Weller's illustration, and the Judge's comment: 'As the soldier said ven they ordered him a hundred and fifty lashes,' 'You must not tell us what the soldier or any other man said, it is not evidence'—is a delightful mixture of real law and farcical satire. The passage is actually quoted in a well-known text-book—'Taylor on Evidence'—on the point of the inadmissibility of 'secondary' evidence. During the readings no passage was greeted with such a roar. Nothing so proved the decay of the old sense of bright humour in the gifted author that he should have added these words: 'Unless he be regularly sworn and dressed in the regimentals of a full private.' This completely destroyed the point and was itself quite pointless. Admirable, too, for its subtle satire is the Serjeant's comment on a phrase in Mr. Pickwick's letter, 'Do not trouble yourself about the warming-pan,' when he breaks out: 'Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about the warming-pan?' a piece of utter forensic nonsense, yet somehow having a specious air. There was a more particular satire intended here, as the present writer lately discovered. Only the year before the famous *cause célèbre* of Norton and Lord Melbourne had been engrossing the town, and Sir William Follett for the plaintiff had laid great stress on some trifling notes or notelets about as harmless as these of Mr. Pickwick. Sir J. Campbell during the defence read them in his defence.

The first is in these words:—'I will call at about half-past four or five. Yours, MELBOURNE.'

The next:—'How are you? I shall not be able to come to-day. I probably shall to-morrow. Yours, MELBOURNE.'

The last:—'No house to-day. I will call after the Levée, about four or half-past. If you wish it later let me know. I will then explain about going to Vauxhall. Yours, MELBOURNE.'

Sir W. Follett gravely urged that 'these letters showed a great and unwarrantable degree of affection, because they did not begin and

end with the words "My dear Mrs. Norton." And he added that 'it seems there may be latent love like latent heat in these productions,' which is one of the points of the Serjeant's—'a mere cover for hidden fire,' &c. The signature too: 'Yours, Pickwick,' is exactly like 'Yours, Melbourne.' Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who tried the case of '*Bardell versus Pickwick*,' was drawn from the well-known, oddly named Judge Gazelee. When reading the part, Dickens took for his model, as he himself informed us, the eccentric utterance of the late Samuel Rogers. Everyone will recall the slow, sepulchral deliberation which gave such point to the dicta of the judge.

One of the most attractive sides of 'Pickwick' is the complete picture it offers of an old English state of manners which has now disappeared or faded out. These characters and incidents belong to the state of society that then existed—nay, are its product. Thus the slow and deliberate mode of travelling by coach, the putting up at inns, enforced a sort of fellowship and contact, and led to acquaintance and displays of peculiarity. The same conditions of travel, too, promoted a species of adventure often not without its farce. Now, with the various changes has come an orderly uniformity, reflected in the dramas of our time, which contrast as strongly with the old boisterous humours of the ancient farces. In country houses, cut off from regular contact with the metropolis, characters such as were found at Dingley Dell were not at all improbable. Mistakes in double-bedded rooms, cordial acceptance of adventurers and impostors, such as Captain Fitz-Marshall, picked up at an assembly rout, elopements, duels, were, as can be seen from the newspapers of the time, ordinary incidents enough. The vivid yet unaffected style in which these now abolished incidents are brought before us is extraordinary. Nothing could be more perfect as a complete picture than the account of the Fleet prison, the fashion of life there, the singular characters, their reckless originality, yet all contributing entertainment while they forwarded the strict 'business' of the piece. We know as much of the Fleet as if we had resided there for months. In the same spirit our author caught the whole flavour of Bath, with its assemblies, master of ceremonies, footmen, &c., so that even now a visitor for the first time finds himself in a manner familiar with it, and feels the peculiar tone of dignified old fashion which had been described to him. In its stately Crescent we only think of Mr. Winkle, and of Mrs. Dowler in the sedan chair.

More interesting still is the series of pictures of a now vanished London, and which in themselves lend the work a sort of antiquarian charm—the Fleet, the Borough, the Law Courts, the old inns. Inns indeed all through the land owe much to Dickens, who has lent a tone of almost poetic associations which have helped to preserve them. Sam's inn in the Borough, the White Hart, still lingers on in a crazy condition, its old galleries on two sides remaining. The most prosaic finds himself unconsciously believing that Sam cleaned boots in that very yard, and that up that rickety stair in the corner he led the Pickwickians to Miss Wardle's room. There are many who in such faith take delight in visiting all the scenes in Dickens's stories, and the Americans are honourably distinguished in this pursuit. The Leather Bottle of Cobham, whither Mr. Tupman fled after his disaster, is a regular spot for pilgrims. The inn at Towcester where the rival editors had their encounter in the kitchen, still flourishes, as does the Crown at Ipswich.

There is little too of that patched air which the necessity of providing something striking for each 'number' entails on the author. New adventures had to be found for each portion, and yet the whole is a fairly homogeneous narrative, nor does it flag towards the end, when a pleasing and moderate sobriety of tone is introduced which awakens interest and makes us part from the characters with regret. Mr. Pickwick and his faithful valet were reintroduced into the introductory chapters of 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' but the effect is unpleasing, as was to be expected, and the chapters have been wisely discarded in later editions.

Finally, the most remarkable of all the attractions of this old favourite is its enduring freshness. We can read it again and again, and, as in the case of the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' can, if not bless, at least thank heartily, the author 'who reconciles us so well to human nature.'

THE GROCER'S WAR.

ONE of the most extraordinary, characteristic, and instructive episodes of that great period of upheaval and transformation, the sixteenth century, the epoch of the Reformation and the Renaissance, of the press giving promise of becoming a power, and of Roman law subverting national codes, is the war, formally proclaimed, and carried on single-handed for between five and six years, between one bankrupt grocer of a suburb of Berlin and the Elector of Saxony, perhaps the most powerful prince of Northern Germany.

It was a war proclaimed and waged according to the rules of warfare as then accepted; and for how much longer it would have drawn on cannot be told, had not the grocer ventured, likewise, to proclaim war against his own sovereign, the Elector of Brandenburg.

The story is extraordinary, for it seems impossible that one man should be able to keep the country in terror and apprehension for so many years, and defy the power of the Elector; it is characteristic, for it could have occurred at no other epoch of modern history; and it is instructive, for it shows us how, under the influence of resentment, a God-fearing, honourable, and sober man may degenerate into a criminal.

The story was so strange and tragic, that one cannot be surprised at fiction laying hold of it and transforming it. Kleist, the tragedian, in 1805 wrote a novel which he pretended to found on this story, but he knew nothing, or next to nothing, of the facts, and trusted to his imagination more than to history. It was not till 1864 that the whole story was told, as it had really occurred, by the Keeper of the Archives at Weimar, from an examination of the documents under his charge.

On October 1, 1532, as evening set in, a traveller riding a good horse, well equipped, and leading another—a chestnut—by the rein, drew up at the door of a village inn at Wellauna, on the high road between Berlin and Leipzig. The traveller called for a drink.

In the inn sat, at the time, a number of peasants drinking, and they turned out to see the stranger. He was a man of about

thirty, with keen grey eyes and a firm mouth. He was dressed in sober garments, but had his horse caparisoned in a manner hardly consistent with his own attire. He was well armed, with pistols and short sword. On the back of the chestnut was a sack of oats. The day was declining. The host of the inn advised the traveller not to proceed further that night, as the way, though a high road, was bad, and also because there were rumours of bandits being about. The stranger shrugged his shoulders, and declined to accept the invitation within.

Then one of the peasants ventured on the remark that no man of honesty would ride abroad at night alone, and asked the traveller his name. He replied curtly, 'that was no concern of theirs,' and spurred his horse to go forward.

Then one of the peasants put his hand on the bridle, arrested the horse, and said that the lord of the village, the Squire of Zaschwitz, had given orders for the detention of every suspicious character who passed that way till he could give a satisfactory account of himself. The traveller was furious. He raised his whip and lashed at the fellow who had touched his bridle. With one voice the peasants charged him with being a highwayman, and with having stolen the horse he rode. They fell upon him; he drew his dagger and defended himself, but was thrown from his saddle. As the horse plunged and kicked, a space was cleared, and the stranger, clearing a way with dagger and pistol—or holster gun—broke through the peasants and escaped on foot, leaving his horses in their hands. The men, certain that they had done a good deed, at once led the horses to the house of the village magistrate, and gave him an account of their proceedings.

The traveller was Hans Kohlhasse, a grocer, living at Colln, then a village on the Spree, now a suburb of Berlin. He was a man of the highest character for integrity, and was known to his own sovereign, the Elector of Brandenburg, whom he supplied with bacon, honey, and herrings, when the Court was at Berlin. He was also a man somewhat above his station in attainments; he was a bit of a scholar, could read a Latin author, and he passed as a zealous adherent of Luther and the Reformation.

It was the time of the great Leipzig fair, and Kohlhasse had sent forward a great consignment of wares to the fair. He was following his wagons at an interval of a few days when the untoward event occurred at Wellauna.

Obliged to pursue his journey on foot, Kohlhasse did not reach

Leipzig till the fair was nearly over. The consequence was that he was obliged to dispose of his goods at a figure below their cost to relieve himself of the expense and trouble of conveying them back to Berlin.

Misfortunes never come singly. On his return he found that a creditor demanded immediate payment for a sum of money he was unable to raise. He fell into difficulties and became bankrupt.

That the affair at Wellauna was the sole cause of his ruin is improbable, but he believed it to be so. If his horses had not been arrested, he would have reached Leipzig in time to sell his goods to a profit, and then he could have satisfied his creditor, and having tided over this difficulty, would have got on. He regarded the Squire of Zaschwitz as the sole origin of his ruin, and gave way to bitter and furious hatred accordingly. He appeared before his sovereign, the Elector Joachim I. of Brandenburg, and laid his complaint before him. He was bidden appear before the Court at Düben on May 13, 1533, and the Squire of Zaschwitz was likewise summoned to appear. Before the Court Kohlhasse demanded the restoration of his horses, and the payment of 150 florins damages. This the Squire refused to pay. He, on his side, demanded twelve florins per half-year for the keep of the horses, and declined to surrender them till this was paid. The horses had, however, been so starved, that the day after the chestnut died.

In July the grocer appealed to the Elector of Saxony, in whose territory Wellauna was, and was referred to his courts of justice. The Squire of Zaschwitz refused all compromise, even though, at the advice of the judge, Kohlhasse lowered his demand for compensation from 150 florins to four florins.

The case dragged on; again the grocer appeared before the Court at Wittenberg, and again the Squire refused all compromise. The Court was inert, and would not enforce payment.

Then the wrath of the grocer flamed up, not now so much against the Squire as against the Elector of Saxony, because his courts of justice failed to do justice to him.

One morning, a few days later, a placard was found affixed to the doors of the electoral palace at Wittenberg and to the town gates, in which the grocer declared at length his case against the Squire; and then he went on to say that because the courts of, and the Elector of, Saxony had neglected to do their duty and en-

force justice, therefore he, Hans Kohlhasse, declared war against Saxony. Here are the words with which this remarkable declaration of war concludes: 'As I have nothing left me but my life to risk, I will defend my honour and my right to the best of my ability, and with every means at my disposal, and with persistence. I declare that I will respect and honour God and all the world, saving and excepting only Squire Gunther of Zaschwitz and the *whole land of Saxony*, and that to the aforesaid realm of Saxony and Gunther of Zaschwitz I shall be declared enemy, to rob, to burn, to maim in hand and foot, to carry off hostages and hold to ransom all such places and such persons wherever I shall come, till such time as Gunther of Zaschwitz shall indemnify me for the losses and wrongs that I have endured at his hands.'

To understand this extraordinary document, it is necessary to know something of the rights of warfare as then understood in the Holy Roman Empire.

It was the understood and acknowledged right of such nobles, princes, and free cities as could not obtain redress for wrongs committed by means of the courts, to have recourse to arms to enforce their rights. But such a recourse must be preceded by a formal declaration of war, and such a war could only be undertaken under certain limitations. No act of violence might be undertaken until three days had elapsed since the declaration of war. None might be committed on four days in the week, from Wednesday evening to Monday morning early, which constituted the Truce of God. Also none might be committed against clergy, the sick, merchants with their wagons of goods, pilgrims, labourers in the field, against churches and churchyards. This right of private war had, indeed, been forbidden by the Diet of Worms in 1495, under pain of death, throughout the entire empire; but at the time of which we write every decree of a Diet must be renewed and accepted by the several princes, and carried out energetically, or it fell into disregard. What was remarkable about this declaration of war was, that it was not proclaimed by one prince, or even by one baron against another, but by a penniless grocer against a very powerful prince and a populous country. What is not less remarkable is that the proclamation, so far from provoking laughter, occasioned general consternation. So far from the Elector of the Saxons generally regarding this as an empty threat, immediate precautions were taken for protection before the three days of grace elapsed.

The news spread like wildfire through Saxony. Double guards were set at the gates of the Saxon towns; no stranger was suffered to enter without credentials. Patrols well armed watched the frontiers and guarded the highways. A courier was despatched in all haste from Wittenberg to the Elector Joachim of Brandenburg to inform him of the declaration of war, and to request him to stay the proceedings of Kohlhasse, with a promise that the courts should reconsider the case of the grocer, and do him justice.

In the meantime, with curious chivalry, Kohlhasse had thrown up his rights of citizenship under the Elector of Brandenburg, so as not in any way to involve his sovereign in the consequences of his proceedings. Joachim accordingly, after keeping the messenger waiting five days, replied that he could do nothing, because Kohlhasse had ceased to be his subject; at the same time he allowed himself to remark, that 'the matter really stands as Kohlhasse has complained. Through neglect of the Saxon courts to do justice to the man, he has been ruined.'

Joachim was a firm and energetic prince, who with iron hand had put down all freebooting and private hostilities between the barons in his territories, and could hardly have been suspected of willingness to shut one eye at such a daring proceeding of a man who lived almost at his doors. But there are wheels within wheels, and Joachim bore a grudge against John Frederick of Saxony. Joachim was a zealous Catholic, and John Frederick was a protector of Luther; but then the grocer was also a favourer of the new light. There were other matters which had caused friction between the two princes, into which we need not enter. Suffice it to say that Joachim was not sorry to see a thorn in his brother Elector's flesh.

On the night of April 9, 1534, the town of Wittenberg, the residential city of the Elector of Saxony, was in flames, set on fire in two opposite directions. The flames were extinguished with difficulty, but on the following night they broke out again in another quarter. Not only so, but the same night the village of Schutzenberg, not far from Wittenberg, was also in flames. The alarm became general.

The Elector John Frederick had undertaken to have the case retried in his courts, but the grocer refused to appear at Wittenberg unless the Elector would grant him a safe-conduct. This the Elector refused to do—he was so angry at the audacity of his

petty enemy, and at the damage done to the town, which he and every one else attributed to Kohlhasse. Moreover, the Elector despised his enemy, and did not doubt that in a few days he would have him by the heels. Time passed, and Kohlhasse was not caught. At length the Elector reluctantly granted the letter of safe-conduct, and the court was to meet and re-hear his case on December 6, 1534, at Jutterbog; but only under condition that Kohlhasse purged himself by oath of having set fire to the capital.

On the day before the court was to assemble, the Sheriff of Wittenberg and the judges appointed to hear the case entered Jutterbog. The Squire of Zaszchwitz was in the meantime dead; his widow and children appeared by representatives.

The court opened in the Town Hall; the square before it, the hall itself, were crowded. Every one wanted to see the daring grocer who had defied their sovereign, and every one was anxious as to the result of the trial.

Before the court would proceed with the case the grocer was required to clear himself by oath of having set fire to Wittenberg. With firm step he advanced to the bar, raised his right hand to heaven, and said, 'I, Hans Kohlhasse, swear by God and the holy Gospel that I am innocent of the charge of having set fire to Wittenberg, either by my own hand or by those of intermediaries. So help me God!'

Then the case was opened. Kohlhasse demanded indemnification for his losses to the amount of 1,200 florins. The defendants offered 300 florins. Finally an agreement was arrived at that the amount should be 600 florins, of which half should be paid by the widow and half by the children of the deceased Squire, and that the whole should be paid on January 1 ensuing.

Thus all seemed settled, and the grocer rode home content. But it was otherwise with the widow. When she heard of the compromise she was angry, and appealed to the Elector against it. He, on his side, wounded in his pride, chafing at having been foiled in his attempts to capture Kohlhasse, disbelieving his oath that he had not set fire to his capital, interfered, forbade the payment of the sum, and declared that the judges had exceeded their authority in sanctioning a compromise. It fell to the duty of the Sheriff of Wittenberg to announce the decision of John Frederick to the grocer. He rode with an escort to Berlin on December 26, drew rein before the house of Kohlhasse, and informed him that

the Elector of Saxony refused to countenance the compromise. The grocer listened with calm, cold demeanour, and answered, 'Tell your master that I understand the message.' That Kohlhasse had not expected good results from the trial at Jutterbog may be judged from the fact that *before* it he wrote to Luther, asking his opinion whether, in the case of justice being denied him, he had a right to carry on war with a sovereign and his land. Unfortunately the grocer's letter has not been preserved, but the Reformer's answer is printed among his letters. It is sensible and just. He told Kohlhasse that he had no right to take the law into his own hands. This letter is dated December 3, 1534.

When it became known that the settlement of Jutterbog was disturbed, alarm became general in Saxony. A price was set on Kohlhasse's head, and the frontiers were watched.

But Kohlhasse remained for some time without taking action, following his business. Every act of violence committed in Saxony that could not be brought home to any one was by the common voice attributed to Kohlhasse; but when examined into, it proved that there were no grounds for surmising that he was implicated.

Suddenly, one day in the ensuing March, when a party of Wittenberg merchants were refreshing themselves in an inn not far from Jutterbog, the house was entered by four armed men, of whom one was Kohlhasse, and the merchants were detained there for several days, and dismissed with a letter of warning written by Kohlhasse on a playing-card (still preserved at Weimar), addressed to the Burgomaster of Wittenberg, to announce that hostilities were about to recommence.

Not long after, a mill near Gommig, on Saxon territory, was attacked, the miller half killed, and the place plundered and set on fire.

Kohlhasse henceforth carried on his war in an ingenious manner. He never kept an organised body of men under his command, but called together one for each several enterprise he undertook, and as soon as that was over dismissed the band. He fell suddenly on a village in the night, plundered it, set it on fire, or forced it to pay an indemnity; sometimes carried away prisoners, whom he held to ransom.

Thus he took a Wittenberg wealthy citizen, called Reiche, captive, along with his wife, and carried them into the Bohemian Forest. He conveyed them finally to an island in a little lake.

There his presence was betrayed, and a large body of Saxon guards and peasants attempted to surround and capture the band. Kohlhasse escaped in a boat, Reiche was taken and placed in the monastery of Birkholz close by, and one of the grocer's servants was captured, and, as the scene of the conflict took place within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Lebus, was handed over to him to be tried and punished. Then ensued a curious circumstance. Reiche had been sent to the monastery of Birkholz, but the brothers there refused to release him, because, they said, he was a prisoner of war taken in legitimate war, and that they were not, accordingly, justified in releasing him. Moreover, they feared the consequences for themselves should they deliver up the captive of Hans Kohlhasse.

The Saxon Government now demanded of the Bishop of Lebus that he should have the servant of Kohlhasse examined by torture, to discover the names of accomplices. This the bishop refused to do. The man was, however, tried and executed.

At the head of thirty-five men Kohlhasse entered the village of Marzalina, a few miles from Wittenberg. Every house was invaded, those who resisted were cut down. Kohlhasse had the pastor brought before him, and announced to him, that unless a certain sum he specified were forthcoming, the village should be destroyed with fire. The money was found, but Kohlhasse carried off the pastor and some of the principal inhabitants. On their way back into Brandenburg territory they set fire to the village of Schmogelsdorf. Wherever they passed they called out the peasants, and made them destroy the bridges in their rear. The pastor and the other captives were finally released on condition of their appearing before Kohlhasse with a ransom on a named day. In the event of their not appearing they were threatened with death. The Abbot of Zinna, near this scene of operations, managed to take some of those who had formed Kohlhasse's band, and speedily tried, sentenced, and executed them. The bodies were placed on wheels erected on the hill above Zinna, on top of poles. In the night Kohlhasse and his band came, removed the bodies, fastened a strip of parchment to the wheels with the sentence on them, 'Judge righteously, O ye sons of men!' and rolled the wheels down the hill upon Zinna. For every life taken of one of his band he exacted another life, or took some other signal vengeance. The whole country was in alarm; the patrols were powerless. Kohlhasse appeared suddenly at one spot, exe-

cuted some deed of violence, disappeared to re-emerge in some other quarter where least expected.

The Elector of Saxony appealed again to the Elector of Brandenburg. Joachim I. was dead ; his son, Joachim II., was inclined to favour the Reform, and a few years later abjured Catholicism. John Frederick hoped that he would assist him to get rid of Kohlhasse. To him, also, Kohlhasse had declared his independence, so that his new sovereign might not be involved in responsibility for the acts of his subject. Joachim II. weakly allowed the Saxon Elector to send his judges into Brandenburg to try, condemn, and execute the culprits within the territories of Brandenburg.

John Frederick was not slow to use this liberty accorded him. His judges passed from village to town, hearing, condemning, executing—they had brought their own Saxon executioner with them. They were accused of condemning on the slenderest evidence. The natives of these parts of the Marches would give no evidence against their fellow-countrymen. The country was roused against them. Kohlhasse made no attempts to fly ; he walked about in Berlin and elsewhere without disguise ; popular sympathy was with him, and popular detestation was roused against the butcher-assizes of the Saxon judges.

The judges, unable to obtain incriminating evidence from the reluctant Brandenburgers, put their victims to the torture, wrung from them confession and the names of confederates, and then executed them. Among those who were accused was one Pfaff, the brother of the nurse of the Electress of Brandenburg. The Electress interceded in his behalf. John Frederick was furious ; this was evidence that the Court of Brandenburg favoured the marauders. The mob rose and threatened the lives of the judges, and to release Pfaff from their hands the Saxon judges therefore carried him away into Saxony, and there executed him. How many were thus put to death is not known, but the number was considerable. In June 1539 the wife of Kohlhasse sent an appeal to John Frederick of Saxony to let bygones be bygones, to pardon what her husband had done ; and she promised that if he would do this, her husband would proclaim peace. The Elector rejected the petition.

In the meantime Kohlhasse had not been idle ; every execution of one of his adherents was revenged in Saxon territory by fire or murder. It was said that some of the patrols sent against him deserted to his side. Certainly every effort to prevent his crossing the frontier failed.

Now ensued one of the most striking episodes of the whole war.

It must be borne in mind that according to the rights of war, as then understood, it was justifiable for one who was at war with another to put to death, rob, and burn on his territories, injuring innocent people, whose only fault lay in being subjects of the prince warred against. Though this was generally acknowledged, yet Kohlhasse's conscience seems not to have been easy concerning the blood that had been shed and the ruin wrought by him; and once more he resolved to appeal to Luther, not this time by letter, but face to face. One night, attended by a single servant, Kohlhasse appeared in Wittenberg—the capital of his enemy's territory—before Luther's house, and requested an interview. When asked his name he refused to give it, but demanded that the interview should be strictly private.

Luther consented to receive him. No sooner were they alone together than Luther said, 'You are Kohlhasse.' 'I am, Doctor.' Then Luther introduced other theologians, amongst them probably Melancthon, and the question of the justice of the war waged by the grocer, and his responsibility before his Maker for the blood and misery that resulted from his war, were discussed. He left the house before dawn, with bowed head, and with his hands nervously twitching. He had passed his solemn word to Luther not to attempt anything more against the land of Saxony. Before he left, Luther gave him the sacrament.

The Elector of Brandenburg now demanded that the names of those incriminated should be sent to him; a list of 115 was at once forwarded. Among these eleven were executed solely for complicity in the affair of Marzalina.

Kohlhasse kept his word to Luther; with rage gnawing at his heart he heard of these new executions, and resented his inability to revenge them. He regretted his promise, and cast about how he might evade its obligation.

Unfortunately for him, a friend suggested the means. His own sovereign, Joachim II. of Brandenburg, had not used his proper influence to exact from the Elector of Saxony that justice which was due to the rights of his case in the matter of the horses at Wellauna. The only way in which he could force this prince into taking up and interesting himself in his case would be to declare war against him!

Incredible as it may seem, Kohlhasse agreed to this, and issued

his proclamation of war against the Elector of Brandenburg ; then waited the legitimate number of days, and proceeded to carry his threat into execution.

A treasure in silver was being conveyed to Berlin from the Mansfeld mines to be minted. Kohlhasse intercepted the convoy, and carried off the silver.

This act of violence against his own sovereign completely turned the current of public sympathy from him ; and it was not difficult for the Elector to obtain possession of his person. He was taken, along with a confederate, and both were condemned to be broken alive on the wheel. With them were sentenced a citizen and his wife, in whose house this confederate had taken refuge, though ignorant who he was, and what crime he had committed. At the last moment the woman received pardon, but she refused to accept it, preferring to die with her husband. Kohlhasse was brought forth to execution with his companion on March 22, 1540. As he stood on the scaffold he was informed that his sovereign had commuted his mode of death to execution with the sword ; but he refused the concession, because it was not extended to his comrade. With bold front, repeating the words ' Never saw I the righteous forsaken,' he presented himself to the executioner, and without a cry endured the protracted agonies of death on the wheel.

LOVE AND PITY.

LOVE knocked softly at the gate
Of your barred and guarded heart ;
Strove he early, strove he late,
Tried in vain each tender art.

Then to aid his trouble sore
Swift his sister Pity came,
And the portal, closed before,
Opened to her sacred name.

Sweet ! you were your own undoer,
Being so to Pity kind ;
As she crossed the threshold o'er
Love himself stole in behind !

FRENCH JANET.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAISIE AT THE HAUGHS, WHERE AUNTIE PEGGY REIGNED QUEEN.

THE house of the Haughs was very differently situated from that of Windygates or Braehead. It was a grey stone house, so nestled in the border of wood which here and there fringed the Deerwater that only its chimneys could be seen above the boughs of the trees. One might have thought the situation too low-lying and damp for health, particularly when the sun in the winter season rose late, and sank, behind the high hills which formed the dale, as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. There was a local proverb extant to the effect—

The maidens of Deer Haughs may well be dun,
Since from Michaelmas to Candlemas they scarce see the sun.

But the Deerwater ran fast on its way to the sea, like many of the Scotch rivers, and in winter great fires kept the old house dry. And Maisie Hunter was not dun, or, more correctly speaking, wan. The healthy flush of the pinkling, as sweet and far less evanescent than that of the wild-rose, was on her softly rounded cheek.

At Windygates, on the crest of the hill, none but the hardiest trees and flowers would grow, not to say flourish. At the sheltered Haughs, in spite of the early retreat of the sun in the winter months, Maisie had a spring, summer, and autumn garden worthy of the name. Pale primroses and freckled cowslips, as well as gowans, decked the turf among the trees and bushes, which were not the gnarled trees and the stunted, torn, and twisted bushes of Windygates and Braehead. There were stately larches and spreading birks and bonnie hawthorns hanging out white sheets of blossom in June, and old-fashioned lilacs in which thrushes and blackbirds sang.

In like manner Maisie's white-panelled parlour, which was very similar to that of Lady Windygates, was a softened edition of the Windygates parlour. It was a much cosier nook, three-cornered, with its fire in one of the corners beneath a high mantel-shelf,

and it had cupboards all round. It had many more embellishments: a beapout, filled with flowers for the most part of the year; a bowl of potpourri, with its subtle spiced scent; a good many more books than Lady Windygates's Bible and cookery-book, some of them in French and Italian, though 'Telemachus' and 'Paul and Virginia' had achieved the popularity of English translations. Maisie's spinet often stood open as if it had been lately touched, and its ivory keys reflected the warm fire-light; a tambour frame, with the soft-hued old silks employed to work out its patterns, kept in countenance the little basket of plain work; a cat and kitten were on the hearth-rug, with amicable relations established between them and an old terrier opposite. The harmony extended to a linnet in a cage hung in one of the bow windows.

Even the great disparity of age between Maisie and her Auntie Peggy, who was in fact her grand-aunt, lent itself to the mellowed and more picturesque aspect of the room. Auntie Peggy was very old—a contemporary of Arthur Hyndford—nearer ninety than eighty. She, too, had gone through her struggles—more purely human and sublunary in her day, without question—but, like Mr. Hyndford, she had outlived them and drifted into that sunny remote region for whose few inhabitants there is nothing save indulgence and forbearance such as are dealt to children. People petted Auntie Peggy, and wondered over her as they would have petted and wondered over a child. If she made the least effort or did anything out of the daily routine, her friends and satellites cried out, and exalted the action as if it had been a marvel. She was spared all fatigue and hardship, and every trouble and anxiety which could be kept from her. The warmest corners of the hearth, the most toothsome bite and sup, were hers as a matter of course, and nobody accused her of selfishness and greediness. She was not allowed to see anything save gracious condescension in her suffering herself to be coaxed and caressed, screened and put on a pedestal, and served with everybody's best.

'I think it must be rather nice to be old like you, Auntie Peggy,' Maisie would sometimes rally her aged relative.

Then the old lady, with an instinctive sense of what was due to her weight of years, and not caring that what brought about her exemption from the ordinary lot of mortals should be undervalued, would draw herself up, shake her head with preternatural solemnity, even graft on that an air of temporary unspeakable affliction, and declare, 'Bairn, it is little you know of it.'

Still Auntie Peggy was (as a rule) a very happy old woman, and Maisie was not shaken in her thankful conviction that age has its privileges and exemptions, and that many of them must be soothing and sweet. She had heard the aphorism 'call no man happy till he die,' and she was aware it was within the bounds of possibility that even dearly loved, tenderly cared-for Auntie Peggy might be rudely shaken in her serene calm and cheerfulness by the rough blast of sudden adversity. But, in spite of the uncertainty of the human lot to the end, such an old age as Auntie Peggy's seemed to Maisie not only a lovely, but a delightful experience.

However, as a natural consequence of being so much watched, waited upon, admired and praised, Auntie Peggy, like other excellent old ladies in like agreeable circumstances, being but human after all, was a good deal spoilt. Indeed, she would have been much more so, and one dreads to think of what might have been the consequences, had she not been in reality very much what she was in Maisie's eyes—a jewel of an ancient maiden. This formed a salutary check to the little pets and storms to which after a long interregnum of some fourscore years she had again become liable, as in the far-away days when she had pushed her dimpled shoulders out of her little frock sleeves and shook her short curls all the time her mother was patiently combing them. Perhaps it was not the wisest way of treating these weaknesses of extreme youth and age to regard them with lively consternation, and to study to parry them, or, when that was hopeless, to seek to charm them away with an eagerness and earnestness which sometimes defeated their object. But what is laughable in the first childhood is so pathetic in the second that one need neither emulate nor envy the man or woman who in the full vigour of bodily and mental power can view with cool contempt the traces of the inevitable crumbling down instead of the building up of the once goodly edifice.

Auntie Peggy was privileged in her dress as in everything else. She was no longer condemned to sit or walk about in uncomfortable state, to wear chill mode or stiff brocade with cobweb lace flapping against her wrinkled cheeks and wizened neck even in the depth of winter. She was at liberty, nay, it was an obligation on her, to have her clothes of the thickest and warmest woollen stuffs in that northern region, to surround herself with ample shawls instead of skimp tippets. She had a voluminous mutch or cap, which almost swallowed up her puckered face and entirely

covered her head ; indeed, had that been exposed, it would have been found as white, glossy, and destitute of hair as many a baby's bald pate or as a hen's egg. Her cap was a shrouding protection from every draught which could whistle about her dim eyes and dull ears. It was like Lady Windygates's morning cap in size ; only, where the one was starched in an uncompromising and excruciating manner, that in itself implied a small martyrdom to the wearer, the other was of exquisitely soft material, and was drawn close round Auntie Peggy's head and face in place of standing out from it like the quills of a porcupine or the rays of the sun. It was Maisie's pride and pleasure to crimp these cambric borders with her silver fruit-knife, as mothers crimped their babies' borders in the days when all babies wore caps, so as to bring the muslin into still smaller compass and render it even less in the way. Auntie Peggy wore her cap all day, not merely in the morning, and when the weather was in the least cold, which it was for the most part on the Deerwater, except for a week or a fortnight in the very height of summer, she surmounted the cap with one of her quilted satin hoods, the frill or 'toy' of which hung halfway down her back. She wore a hood on the rare occasions when she went abroad, instead of a turned-up beaver hat, with feathers, which custom compelled Lady Windygates to wear, though it exposed her pinched features unmercifully. Such a hat was really not becoming to any woman older or less plump than Maisie Hunter.

In this ideal guise for an old lady Auntie Peggy not only sat in private ; once or twice a year, on the longest, brightest summer Sundays, she drove in the Haughs coach to Deerholms Kirk. She had long ceased to visit any house save the House of God, where her presence was apt to be regarded not merely as an act of grateful homage to the Deity, and the exercise of the greatest privilege a sinful human being could claim, but also as a peculiar compliment to the Rev. Andrew Brydon, the officiating clergyman, and her fellow-worshippers. The fact of old Mrs. Peggy Hunter's having been at the kirk was one of the events of the Christian year on the Deerwater.

Auntie Peggy had always been fond of company, in a sensible modest way, and her court, which meant Maisie and all the household at the Haughs, were so wrapped up in her, and proud of her, that they would have considered it the greatest slight to any visitor for him or her to have been entertained at the Haughs

without getting the opportunity of seeing the family idol and having speech with her. If she was not in her most genial humour, and did not do herself justice, it was a matter of the deepest regret to her circle.

Maisie would never have left her aunt for the months which she had been spending in the north, had not duty called her—a ‘bounden duty,’ which, although the old lady chose to make light of it sometimes, at other times she was as ready to admit as Maisie was herself. Some of Maisie Hunter’s dead mother’s nearest relations had fallen into great and manifold trouble. They had lost the principal part of their means; they had been attacked by sore sickness, of which the most available members had died, leaving a helpless group behind them. Maisie had gone to them in their need, to do what she could for them. It was always considered, even by her elders, that, though she was only a girl, she could already do a good deal in such sad circumstances. The great age of her Auntie Peggy had made a woman of Maisie early in life, and had developed all her resources. She had a wise head for her years, a pair of ‘capable’ useful hands where nursing was in question, some money at her command, and, still more, good will in a good cause. She was in training to be one of the notable dames on the Deerwater: to farm her own land, as Lady Boarhills had farmed hers after her husband’s death; to start a thread-mill or a mill for the manufacture of groats, and make it pay, as Lady Mossriggs, finding other means fail her, in consequence of Mossriggs’s losses in his Edinburgh lawsuit, had boldly attempted, with signal success; like Mistress Kirsten Shaw, in the west, and Lady Peggy Carnegie, in the east of Scotland. And, if there was nothing else left for her to do save superintend the Haughs maids’ spinning, and sending their hanks of yarn to be sold to the hand-loom weavers at Pitblair, still Maisie Hunter would not be beaten—she would see that the Haughs maids span more and better yarn than the maids in any of the country-houses round could spin. It cannot be denied that Maisie had in her the seeds of such staunch practicality, unswerving determination of purpose, and tolerably well-warranted confidence in herself as had combined to render Lady Windygates the woman she was, and, generally speaking, to make the matrons on the Deerwater at once so estimable and so formidable, so undeniably the better horses in the domestic team, in the impartial judgment of Braehead. Happily for Maisie, her tendency to dictate and domineer was kept

in check, up to the present time, by her delight in her old Auntie Peggy and her devotion to her.

Auntie Peggy was decidedly fond of news—the lingering echoes of the affairs of life, with which she had now nothing further to do than to listen to them. But her sympathies were not numbed by the frost of age, any more than good Mr. Hyndford's were eclipsed by the glory of his saintliness, and hearing the echoes cheated her into the belief that she was still playing her part in the great, never-ending drama, which was being enacted around her. It was the business of everybody who went in or out of the Haughs to purvey for Auntie Peggy in this respect, to collect and bring home every crumb of the waterside gossip on her behalf. But it was the greatest triumph which the old lady could experience if, when sitting at home, there came to her, by accident, some extraordinary sensational tidings, with which she in her turn could astound and overwhelm the unlucky person who had been out riding or walking, or calling on acquaintances, and yet had brought back no piece of common information worth repeating.

This exulting sense of superiority was Auntie Peggy's when she hailed Maisie Hunter coming in from a drive as far as Pitblair, a couple of days after she had arrived from the north. Auntie Peggy made the intimation, with which she was primed, half elated, because of her being the first to convey the fresh rousing shock it would administer—half with a delicious sense of awe and concern because of the blood-curdling calamity which had befallen a highly respected neighbour, and the call there was on the unfortunate woman's friends to sympathise with her.

'You'll not guess what I have heard when you were out, Maisie,' cried Auntie Peggy, beginning to get breathless already in her excitement.

'No, what could it be, Auntie?' cried Maisie. 'Take time, do not bring on your cough.'

'Never mind my cough,' wheezed Auntie Peggy, with a grand recklessness.

Maisie felt it incumbent on her to get up the most ardent curiosity, while she took off her beaver hat and cast aside her fur tippet.

Maisie Hunter was not so little a woman as Lady Windygates was, but it could not be said that there was much of her physically, and, however matured she might be in mind, her body, such as it was, was still in the hardly developed stage of girlish slimness.

A slender creature, who was always declared to be a great deal stronger than she looked, though, indeed, her looks betokened no lack of health and vigour for her sex and age—rather the reverse; a dark-haired girl, with her rosy mouth a trifle too large, but fine and firm in its lines, and her cheek-bones slightly prominent after the fashion of her countrywomen. The whole face inclined to taper to the chin. The complexion of a carnation freshness. The hazel eyes very clear, straightforward, and reasonable, with a shade of imperiousness in their glance. The forehead, from which the hair was thrown back to fall in long curls on the shoulders, full and open.

‘It was nothing less,’ proclaimed Auntie Peggy with recovered breath, ‘than that young Windygates—than that young Windygates,’ she stammered in her haste, ‘who came back from Paris months syne, as I writ to you, had been playing most terrible pranks in foreign parts. I would never have thought it of the laddie.’ She was so bent on disburdening herself of her tale that she took no pains to prepare the listener, who, if Lady Windygates were correct in her data, ought to have waited in overwhelming agitation for what was to follow. Instead of more considerate behaviour, the venerable *raconteuse* showed an inclination to play with her bait and her prey after the manner of ancient cats dangling mice before youthful kittens.

‘No! but what has young Windygates been doing?’ chimed in Maisie. She kept up a semblance of the breathless interest which would be acceptable to her kinswoman, but was otherwise guiltless of the slightest breach of the maidenly reserve so much prized in those days. And, if Maisie’s maidenliness hid any extravagant warmth of feeling, it was positively heroic in its successful concealment of emotion.

‘Say rather, what has he not been doing,’ exclaimed Auntie Peggy, lifting up her withered hands and letting them fall with emphasis in her lap. ‘The cruel villain carried on with an unhappy Frenchwoman—some say she was a nun out of a convent, but if that were so I see not how him and her could either foregather or hold tryst together. Anyway, when she sought to stop him and force him to right her wrongs as he was in the travelling coach with Braehead, starting on their homeward journey, Allan Windygates with an oath bade the coachman drive over her body, so that the wretched woman was flung down among the horses’ feet and trampled to death in the street.’

At last Maisie was moved out of her composure, and of all things by a fit of hearty girlish laughter into which she broke.

'Oh, Auntie Peggy,' she cried, holding her own long taper waist, and swaying herself from side to side in the height of her glee; 'how could you let yourself be taken in to believe such a pack of howers? Young Windygates give orders to ride over any woman! He would not ride over a dog, a cat. He was just silly about hurting any living thing except in the way of a gentleman's sport; so is his father before him, as I have heard Lady Windygates tell.'

CHAPTER XIV.

MAISIE RECEIVES HER SUMMONS.

MAISIE had forgotten herself, and Auntie Peggy felt not only called upon to remind her niece of the fact—she was, as might have been expected, highly offended.

'What is the world coming to, Maisie Hunter, that you can laugh to scorn deeds of iniquity and barbarity committed by another young person belonging to this wicked generation? Further, how can you tell *me* to my face, *me* who brought you up, and was an old woman ere you were born, that I am easily taken in and deceived!' And the old lady turned aside her head, that her eyes might not behold the heinous culprit.

'Oh! I beg your pardon, Auntie,' implored Maisie, full of penitence; 'now, don't be vexed, but look at me and say that you believe I did not mean it, though I was very rude and thoughtless. Still you know that we have been intimately acquainted with the present Windygates family all our days, at least all my days. Why, I thought you had a great friendship for the old people (the chit of a girl called Lady Windygates and Windygates, who might have been Auntie Peggy's daughter and son, old!). I thought the young Windygates was a favourite of yours ever since he gave the alarm as a boy—that time the tod broke into the farmyard, and after he made your chair stand level, only last winter.'

'I never pretended that I could not be taken in,' said Auntie Peggy, still speaking with extreme dignity, and with her head turned away. But I'm not the only creature there is to be cheated and played with.'

'No, indeed,' said Maisie earnestly, 'I think you are the most

sagacious woman alive. You see a great deal farther than all the rest of us put together, and no wonder when you've seen so much and lived so long, before we began to blink at the lamplight and dance to our shadow. Only look round at me and be friends, dear Auntie, when I'm not many days come back,' besought Maisie insinuatingly, by this time clasping the old lady round the neck; 'you'll give yourself a stiff neck or a bad headache, and you know how that will vex me, if you keep looking over your shoulder like that.'

'I'm the best judge of that, Maisie Hunter; I may be surely allowed to look over my shoulder or down at my feet, if I think fit, without asking your leave, or taking your feelings into account. If not, I'm a poor, stupid, useless old body, and it would be well if I followed my generation.' With this speech Auntie Peggy's capacity for retaliation was wont to reach its climax. She felt it cut the listeners to the heart, while it drew from them the most anxious protests that she was not stupid or useless—far from it, and that, in place of its being well if she were gone, it was very unkind and untrue of her to speak in that way, for her friends could not tell what they should do without her, which was a fact.

Auntie Peggy was the more easily appeased on this occasion that she had not opened up half the budget, and she was longing to do so. 'Well, Maisie, you may refuse to believe my version of the matter, if you will. No doubt young Windygates and you were old playmates, and it has not been Lady Windygates's fault that you have not been more, which the Lord forbid from this day. But what do you make of this for a corroboration of my tale, he is so sorely changed since he was away that his own mother would hardly have recognised him if she had met him abroad without warning? He shuns all company and goes nowhere, for, go where he like, there are clogs that he cannot leave behind him, which are hard work to carry among strangers or among innocent, easy-minded friends. And what are the clogs, Maisie, but his guilty conscience, and the ghost of the murdered woman? She has followed him in the spirit, though he would not take her in the body, and she 'walks' at Windygates morning, noon, and night, week after week. She has been seen by scores of people besides him, who will not take guilt to himself by owning that he sees her. She stopped even that heathen Braehead, and good Arthur Hyndford was so put about by her in his very chamber, in spite of his having vanquished the Devil and all his

angels when they had power in the land, in the days of his youth, that he left the place, saying that he would never put his foot across the threshold of Windygates again. Eh! it must be very disagreeable for Windygates and my lady to have their household and visitors so plagued, forby the stain on their son. Folk think they will have to shut up the house and build another, or go to some other part of the country. That comes of sending a lad to France for the fashion of the thing—Ann Wedderburn must have been fair possessed—and of his falling into the ways of wanton sin and brutal violence.'

Maisie was a little more cautious in contradicting Auntie Peggy again; all that she ventured to do was to put two exceedingly pertinent questions to the speaker. 'Auntie Peggy, did you ever know a young man who had always borne the best of characters—more than that, when you were sensible that he had not been an accomplished hypocrite, but a well-disposed, friendly fellow, fond of children and animals—break out all of a sudden into gross depravity and shocking inhumanity? And tell me, did you ever, with your own eyes, see a ghost?'

'No, my dear, I never did know such a grievous contradiction,' said Auntie Peggy, who was perfectly candid and remarkably sensible when she was taken on the right side, 'nor did I ever, to my knowledge, encounter anything uncanny. But then you must mind this, Maisie, though maybe I should not boast, I have tried throughout a long life, with all my wrong-doings and short-comings, for which I humbly hope to be forgiven, to lead an honest and honourable life, and I am come, as you may be thankful that you are too, of honest and honourable—ay, and godly forbears. Did I ever tell you of my cousin Lady Bawbie, who used to sit at conventicles in the winter out on the moss, where the troopers could not ride down on them, till her duffle mantle was frozen to the ground?'

'Yes,' answered Maisie a little absently, for she had heard of Lady Bawbie's intrepidity scores of times.

'It must be clean dreadful,' continued Auntie Peggy, 'to have forbears who have committed ugly crimes for which their descendants must suffer unto the third and fourth generation, and far longer. For there are Yerl Beardie and the other card-players in the vanished room at Glamis that have been drinking and dicing and cursing and swearing for hundreds and hundreds of years.'

Begging Lady Windygates's pardon for contradicting her conviction, Maisie Hunter had up to this time hardly thought of young Windygates, except with a friendly feeling for one whom she had known all her life, who had been a child a year or two older than herself when she was a child, and had played with her, chasing minnows and 'paidling' in the shallow pools where the Deerwater found a rocky bed, or having games of hide-and-seek in the lumber-rooms and the long passages of the Haughs and Windygates. She had been cool enough to sit in judgment on his slower growth of intellect and his halting scholarship; she had criticised his blonde hair and florid complexion, his curling on the ice, and football-playing on the grass; and had come to the calm conclusion that, though he danced reels better than his neighbours and friends— young Boarhills and Mossriggs—Boarhills, at least till young Windygates went to Paris, beat him in the minuet. Indeed her mind was as well-disposed even to the younger sons at Boarhills and Mossriggs as to the heir of Windygates, and, since Maisie was not only a bonnie lass, but also the heiress of the Haughs, and knew her own value in either light, she was likely to have both her pick and choice of the young men in the neighbourhood, and to avail herself in full of her privilege of picking and choosing.

But Lady Windygates had got what she desired for her son, though she had neither anticipated the manner in which her wishes were to be accomplished, nor fairly realised, at the height of her misfortune, that they were accomplished. She had coveted distinction for young Windygates, and he was distinguished over all the men on the Water for that and succeeding generations.

Maisie Hunter was arrested and occupied by the strange distinction which had befallen her old playmate. She could not take him off or criticise him any longer. A ghost-ridden man was out of the pale; and she was sufficiently strong herself, with enough tenderness and reverence at the core of her nature, to keep her pity from passing into contempt. On the contrary, it was touched with a soft awe. She had the making of a noble woman in her for all her crude self-confidence.

Not long after Auntie Peggy's marvellous tale, Maisie saw its hero when he did not see her. She started back, and her fine colour faded in sympathy. Was that moody man with the slouching gait, the white haggard face, and the wild eyes, honest, manly young Windygates, whose stalwart figure and springing step she

had called a shepherd's properties, whose ruddy complexion and bashful blue eyes she had likened to those of a ploughman? Nobody would laugh at him now for those vanished attributes any more than people had laughed at young Walter Riddel, who went about wasting in a decline and struggling against fate—or the will of God, for two summers. She was nearer to respecting Allan Wedderburn in his misery, which she could not look upon as justly deserved, than she had ever been in his light-hearted prosperity, before sickness and sorrow had brought him low. He might have sinned and fallen, for alas! men were weak—weaker than women, Maisie feared, in some things; but he had never been the abandoned wretch which his native parish was foolish and wicked enough to represent him. Poor lost Allan, who had been so brave and blithe, with such bright prospects before him only six months ago! He was lost if no rescue came to him. People said his own father had turned against him, only his mother would never forsake him. Maisie longed to help him and his mother—it was her nature to help; she burned to stand by them—to show them that they had one friend who was not daunted by life or death, or what lay behind death. She did not believe half she heard, and, where that half was in question, could make allowance and forgive, while she hung her head and was sorry, sorry that men were not perfect—neither were women for that matter—but then the imperfections, like the temptations, of such women as Maisie had known, were of a totally different kind.

With Maisie to long and burn was to act, but she took her measures with deliberation and foresight. In the first place she delicately suggested to Auntie Peggy, with her genial love of company, that it might be a cheerful variety for the depth of the winter, as well as a compliment to the invited guest, to ask another favourite grand-niece, Sibbie Gordon, to come and stay at the Haughs over the New Year.

When the old lady had unsuspiciously lent a ready assent to the proposal, Maisie made an amendment upon it. There was Jamie Gordon, a lieutenant in a foot regiment, at home for a month or two. Sibbie would be sorry to lose so much of her only brother's company, and doubtless he would not object to get a little wild-duck shooting, and hunting, if he could come too.

Auntie Peggy looked keenly at Maisie from between the crimped, close-fitting borders of the old woman's cap. But the next instant Maisie was carelessly detailing the particulars of

Jamie's engagement to Mary Kennedy, 'one of the Kennedys of Birkenshaw, and not the Kennedys of White Knowe, you know, Auntie.' He was to be married to her whenever he got his company, and Maisie had promised, if she could be spared, to dance at the wedding.

Then Auntie Peggy nodded, and said Lieutenant Jamie might come too. They did not want another man's protection during the dark nights. She was content to trust to Tammas, who was a married lad of fifty, and as steady as a rock when he had not got more than the daily dram, on the strength of which he had presided over the sideboard and the pantry for five-and-twenty years; and to Jock, who was not quite so steady, but was not 'that bad,' and had shown himself a fine hand among the horses and the cows. Still, in the view of the guisards and first-footing at New Year, the family might not be the worse of Jamie Gordon in the dining-room.

Maisie's next quiet proposal was that when the Gordons were come, and she would not be too much missed, she might go over and see what was wrong at Windygates.

'Bairn!' cried Auntie Peggy, taken aback, 'are you out of your senses? Nay, but you must be set up and left to yourself, Maisie Hunter, to think of thrusting yourself—you, a foolish, inexperienced lassie—among witches and the spirits of the dead, from whom even Mr. Hyndford had to beat a retreat; to go where you're not wanted, moreover, for I'm sure and certain Ann Wedderburn will not desire strangers to be witness to their sorry plight, far less drawn into jeopardy.'

'We are not strangers,' maintained Maisie, 'and I'm convinced you would go yourself if you were able. You would not fail a friend in need. What is to become of him, and all of them, if everybody turns their back upon them without more ado? How can we know whether or not they want us until we try? I do not think Mr. Hyndford would leave them in order to provide for his own peace and safety, it would not be like him; but if so he is very old—maybe too old to cope with a foe.'

'Ay, or with a young high-headed lass like you,' said Auntie Peggy with a groan of peculiar severity. 'Take heed, Maisie, for pride and a haughty spirit go before a fall.'

'I do not mean to be proud and haughty,' said the girl gently; 'I have asked your permission, Auntie Peggy, and if you refuse to grant it to me I'll never mention the subject again.'

But how will you bear to think that you've deserted your friends by declining to send me to them? I know I am not like you, I am young and ignorant, and can do little, but if you send me when you cannot go yourself it will at least show your goodwill.'

'How can you lay such a burden upon me?' Auntie Peggy protested, bemoaning herself, with some reason. 'Send a bairn like you, an only bairn—all that is left of my goodly nephew Charlie, my only brother's only son, and his bit wife, the young mistress of the Haughs—you that I've striven so hard to bring up worthy of her place—send her where? Into the very jaws of hell, if all be true. It would be like Abraham offering up Isaac, the child of promise, the son of his auld age.'

Maisie could hardly endure the sight of the blinding tears, the hard-wrung tears, at Auntie Peggy's years, gathering in the dear, dim eyes; but she did not withdraw her petition. 'Abraham had faith, and went up to the Mount,' she said softly, 'and God spared his son and made him the father of a mighty nation.'

A reaction seized on Auntie Peggy. She got pettish, and would have it that Maisie was tired of her home already; that, after having been away all the summer from her whose days could not be many now, she, Maisie, was only eager to leave her old Auntie again, and go off on any uncalled-for, mad—it might be profane—adventure which turned up.

But Maisie rose up in her own defence. 'It is not fair of you to speak like that, Auntie Peggy,' she said with youthful loftiness of indignation; 'you know I only went to the North because it was my duty to go, and you saw that as well as I. I did not stay a week longer than I could help. Neither will I stay a day longer than is necessary at Windygates. I'll ride over every morning if you like, to see how you are, and to show that I'm taking no harm—as what harm should I take, me doing my duty, with Heaven above me? You'll have Sibbie and Jamie Gordon, whom you like, to take care of you and divert you in my absence.'

'Divert!' exclaimed Auntie Peggy in high disdain, as if diversion were the farthest thing from her thoughts, and the mere mention of it were an insult. She had to fall back on a former argument. 'Ann Wedderburn would have let us know if she had wished for our company. She is not the woman to take it well of

us to go where we're not bidden, and stare at her in the day of her calamity.'

But this argument proved the most broken reed of all, for the very next day there came a letter from Lady Windygates begging Maisie to go over and see them. The letter was written in a hurried, agitated manner, which in itself showed to those who could read between the lines that the writer was beginning to break down. It ran as follows:—

'Dear Cousin Maisie,

'I've heard you've come back at last. I've been wearying sore to see you, but I cannot go over to the Haughs at present. Will you do me the favour of paying us a visit to try if that will brighten us up, for my dear son has been very ill, and everything has been going wrong with us. Only believe me, it is not our fault—at least not greatly so. It is more like a spite of destiny against us. But I do not mean that Providence is not looking after us, and will not bring us through our troubles at last. I have not time or ability to enter into particulars on paper. I'll tell you all by word of mouth. I will content myself with saying this now, that, though there may be pain and regret in the telling, there is no real shame, thank God, however Windygates may choose to behave, and whatever the Waterside may think fit to say in their lack of charity and hard judgment.

'Tell my old friend, your Auntie Peggy, that I will be deeply grateful to her if she will let you come over, that is, if you yourself do not object to come near us; for whiles I believe nobody will look the earth we are in soon, till we are, as it were, forsaken by God and man. But I think better of the friendship of a Hunter to a Wedderburn.

'Tell your Auntie again that I will take the greatest care of you. I will never let you out of my sight, day or night, if that will make her mind easy. I will look for you, if I do not hear to the contrary, some time to-morrow, and may the Lord bless you and keep you from evil, and give you a rich reward for taking pity upon us!

'Your old friend and kinswoman,

'ANN WEDDERBURN.'

Auntie Peggy and Maisie looked into each other's faces when they had read this letter, and felt there could only be one answer to

it ; but Auntie Peggy considered herself justified in addressing an additional appeal to Maisie. 'Are you not feared, bairn ? If you feel your heart sinking at the prospect, just say the word, and no power on earth will induce me to send you there, though she should fleech and pray and rake up old friendship, and promise till she's black in the face.'

'But I'm not feared,' said Maisie, drawing up her slight figure, and looking courageously out of her clear hazel eyes ; 'I'm not lightly daunted, and what should daunt me here ? Is not God at Windygates as well as at the Haughs ? And, if He permit spirits, good or evil, to have their way for a time, is not He always their master ? No, my heart is not sinking.'

'Then I must beg to remind you of what she has sought to bring about before now,' said Auntie Peggy, with stately, maidenly mysteriousness, 'something that is not to be thought of now, at any price. But I'll not free her from throwing you together, and ettling to speak you over. I know Ann Wedderburn's tricks, though she is a good woman, and an auld friend.'

'Am I like a girl that would be spoken over, Auntie Peggy ?' demanded Maisie proudly. 'Do you think I should be got round and wheedled into what I did not want to do, though it were the merest trifle, and not the most momentous step in my life ? Do you not see for yourself that I'm woman grown ? Do you forget that I have a mind of my own, and can act for myself when it is right and fit I should so act ?'

'I believe you there, bairn,' said Auntie Peggy with a mixture of admiration and sarcasm.

Happily it did not occur to Auntie Peggy, and possibly it did not dawn upon Maisie herself at that moment, or for some time to come, that young Windygates had really no need of his mother's interposition and scheming. In addition to whatever gifts of nature and fortune he had formerly possessed, he had won a new irresistible fascination for a certain order of mind. Maisie might of her own free will walk into the net. In her splendid courage and generosity she might voluntarily sacrifice herself, glorying in the deed, if that can be rightly called a sacrifice which is, after all, fulfilling the highest capacity of the creature.

CHAPTER XV.

MAISIE BREAKS THE SPELL.

WHEN Maisie arrived at Windygates she brought with her a daylight atmosphere, a breath of the open air and the sunshine, fit to dispel the dank vapours and dismal dreams of the night and the darkness. The long faces of Ritchie and Jenny, who let her in and took her to Lady Windygates's parlour, cheered up wonderfully at the sight of the young lady, though Jenny, with a certain amount of shocking disloyalty to her sex, proceeded the next moment to make certain remarks in confidence to Ritchie. What would not a woman do for a man, and a lass for her joe, that the heiress of the Haughs no less, a beauty and a toast in her set, should venture to Windygates the first thing on her return home, to fight with a spirit, which of them should get young Windygates? Folk had always said she was a stout-hearted lass, as Lady Windygates had been in her day, but she had not been called upon to make such a fight for the master. Jenny could not tell what would come of it; her sole conviction was that if Miss Hunter of the Haughs won the victory in such a conflict nobody need say 'straw' to her from that hour. She would be the most powerful woman in the country-side.

The very thought of a girl's coming voluntarily into the beleaguered house and daring an encounter with the enemy was wonderfully encouraging. Maisie brought to her task the purity to which all things are pure, the best common sense, which is akin to genius, considerable womanly tact, and much kindly feeling. She listened with respectful attention, while still in her riding habit, as Lady Windygates poured forth her version of the story, taken from Braehead's narrative, of young Windygates's acquaintance with Madame St. Barbe, his obligation to her, and the disaster of her violent death.

All that Maisie said, with a sympathetic sigh, was, 'Poor Allan, he was always unsuspicious and trustful; I can fancy him overgrateful for small cause. His humane heart must have been cut to the quick by her terrible end.' But she would not concur in Lady Windygates's bitter reflections on Braehead for accepting the services of such a young woman, and on the dead woman for her consequent conduct.

'She was the Duchess's cousin and daily companion, and our

Lady Lathones consented to consort with her. I cannot make it out,' the harassed mother had said. 'But to follow the travelling carriage of a young strange man to the city gate and force herself on his notice, and then, when her recklessness and obstinacy brought about her doom, to give him the wyte by coming over here and wrecking his life, as if she had not done him enough ill already with getting herself trampled to death among his coach-wheels and horses' feet before his een, and the lad in the weak state of a man new out of a fever—all that is what I'm not prepared to pardon. And to think it was just because he was simple and rash like a man! Well, it beats me. Why it is permitted by the Higher Powers is what I cannot understand.'

'Should it not be enough that it is permitted?' said the Scotch Portia; 'and Lady Windygates, if I were you, I think I would not be hard on Braehead, for, had he not suffered the lady to help him to nurse young Windygates, you might have lost your son. As for the lady, I suppose you mean that she was no better than a light woman in her degree, though Allan was too honest to doubt her honesty. That may be, I cannot tell; I have no knowledge of such things,' said Maisie with a kind of stately, youthful innocence. 'But, if she was not light to him, if she tended him like a sister, and if her heart went out after him, and she was slain in seeking to reach him and exchange words once more—ay, and if she come in the spirit where she can never come in the body, and cannot tear herself away from the place that owns him—oh! Lady Windygates, if I were you, I would deal gently with her as with my son. He may thank you for your forbearance; anyway, I would not be the one to ban her.'

'Well, well, Maisie, if that is your opinion I'll say no more,' said Lady Windygates with unusual docility, almost deference. 'Maybe, if you try him, young Windygates will speak to you and give you the confidence that he has refused to his mother. As for Windygates, he has never claimed his due in that respect. He is as dour as Allan is.'

'But I think Windygates is right,' persisted Maisie in her independence of spirit and speech. 'It is young Windygates's affair. It concerns nobody else—not even his father and mother. Don't you see, he would feel like a traitor to the unhappy lady if he complained of her visits and proclaimed the favour which she had shown him both in life and in death? As for me, I would never dream of presuming to speak to him on such a topic. It

is no business of mine,' said Maisie, not scornfully, but with a directness and decision which nearly took away Lady Windygates's breath. 'I have come over as you wished, to tell you my news, ask you my new guessing tales, and sing you my last songs. I'll play a game of draughts or dominoes with Windygates, and challenge young Windygates to beat me at battledoor and shuttlecock, or at Scotch proverbs—that is, if you will all let me. If you will not, and I cannot help you in the only way in my power, but am just a burden and plague to you, then I'll go back to Auntie Peggy.'

'Do what you like, my dear, only don't leave us,' said Lady Windygates hastily.

Young Windygates had not been informed of the invited guest or of her arrival, and when he met her at supper he started and stared aghast, and could hardly give her a civilised greeting, as if he had lost the manners of civilised society, or as if she were the phantom whose haunting presence was poisoning the very springs of life and rendering it no longer worth living. And Maisie was a phantom of the past, of the happy thoughtless days which were gone for ever, of the light-hearted youth which had been darkened and crushed into premature age. Could Maisie Hunter really be the same as he had left her in early summer? Could no change have come to her in what had been to him this portentous autumn and winter? Was there nothing in her life answering in some degree to the miserable transformation which had been wrought on him? No, there she sat bright and fresh with her dainty falling collar and an old ivory rose, which he knew contained a miniature of Auntie Peggy, instead of the garden rose which the season would not yield, on her breast. And he was painfully conscious of what, in addition to his haggard looks, had become the slovenly disorder of his toilette, his uncared-for hair, his crumpled cravat, the absence of ruffles at his wrists, with his coat and vest unchanged since morning.

At first Maisie Hunter's presence simply vexed Allan Wedderburn, and he was inclined to turn away from it in sad and sullen avoidance; but, when she did not show the slightest sign of observing his reluctance to renew their intercourse, or of realising that he was no longer the old Allan at whom she had jeered a little, flouting him in her saucy girlish way, than that she was somebody else in the room of Maisie Hunter, gradually and insensibly he answered to the familiar looks and tones. He roused himself to take some interest in what she was saying, and to respond some-

what languidly, but not altogether out of character, to her lively appeals. She told him what sport was to be had in the north, and what she had seen of the grouse and the red deer; she reminded him that he had left Windygates before the football match on Cairnie Lea, and the grand ball after it. For the first time he heard a description of the match given with many graphic details. She put it to him to supply the list of beauties at the ball, and what marriages were likely to follow on the sets of dances which the same couples had kept up for well-nigh a round of the clock. She provoked young Windygates into asking her questions. Lady Windygates fairly leapt in her chair to hear him laugh at some of her replies. Windygates suddenly rapped on the table, looked his son frankly in the face, and addressed him more cordially than he had done for many a day. 'I say, Allan, man, we had no ball to keep your birthday' (he did not say, 'your home-coming'); 'we'll have one and make all the young people in the neighbourhood your debtors before the winter is over.'

Young Windygates did not answer—in truth, he was a little dazed; but Maisie cried out, 'Yes, yes, and you'll do it before Sibbie and Jamie Gordon go home, that they may get the benefit. Balls do not come every day.'

The next morning Allan's hair was dressed in the last French fashion, and his broad cloth and linen—down to his shoe-buckles—were irreproachable. He paid Maisie that compliment, and he had not looked so like himself since he returned from his ill-omened visit to France, or so well, in his pale subdued manliness, in his whole life before.

Maisie's eyes sparkled, and her heart fluttered a little at the sight. The house seemed to shake off an incubus. Lady Windygates went about briskly, and her domestic occupations recovered their old zest. Windygates tramped cheerfully out and in, and asked young Windygates what he thought of this herd of cattle, and whether that 'sow' of hay would last them over the winter. Maisie at her knitting begged somebody to read the Edinburgh newspaper which the weekly post had just brought in. She laid down her work, and requested to be taken round the offices to compare the cows and the horses, the cocks and the hens, with those at the Haughs. What did she care for the biting cold upon the bleak hillside? She stole Windygates's plaid, and rolled it round her as if she had been an Arcadian shepherdess, and laughed at the icicles hanging from the eaves of barn and byre. She

opened Lady Windygates's spinnet, and ran her white fingers up and down the yellow keys, awakening long silent echoes. She went up and down the stairs and along the gallery, humming 'Within a mile of Edinburgh town,' and 'The bush aboon Traquair.' Straightway Jenny and Aillie caught up the tunes and sang them as they made the pasties in the kitchen and dusted the china closet; and Ritchie and Pate took up the refrains and whistled them in the pantry and the cellar, at the peat-stack and the draw-well.

It was as if the whole household fell into a conspiracy to rout the enemy, and at the root of it all were simply the will and the presence of a young girl.

The different domestics gathered covertly to see Lady Windygates and Maisie ride off, escorted by young Windygates, bound for a call at the Haughs, to thank Auntie Peggy for sparing Maisie. During the visit not a word was said of the cause. All was old-fashioned politeness and marked graciousness. Even after the little party had left, Auntie Peggy, who was flattered by the fact that she was the first neighbour, not of his own age and sex, whom young Windygates had gone formally to see since his illness and his return from Paris, showed herself tolerably short-sighted and inconsistent. She made a point of his having grown a bonnie lad, though he still bore traces of his long sickness. He was so much improved in his comeliness and douceness that she could not believe there was anything far wrong with him. With regard to her grand-niece Maisie, she was neither sick nor sorry. She had slept a night at Windygates, yet she had come over to the Haughs as blithe as a lark.

That night the talk in the kitchen at Windygates was no longer of corpse candles in the Bog o' Weary, or coffins starting out of the fire, and winding sheets out of the candles, or of steps on the stairs, and the trailing and rustling of a silken gown in the gallery—but, among the women, of the fashion of Miss Maisie Hunter of the Haughs' sleeves, and the manner in which her beaver was trimmed; among the men, what was the worth of the new whip young Windygates carried, and whether his stirrups were plated, or solid like his father's; and, among both men and women, what was the chance of a braw bridal and a grand play in the course of the coming year.

What might be called the gladsome convalescence of the household did not die out with the passing away of the novelty of Maisie's appearance among them, clothed in the wholesome garb

of common life and everyday associations, with her heart free from an oppression of ignorant terror, fearless, trustful and happy, as a young creature's heart should be. Not only did Maisie see nothing and hear nothing which she might not have seen and heard without a marvel at the Haughs: other people ceased to see and hear unaccountable sights and sounds. The sough of them and the slavery to them died out as rapidly as it had arisen. Young Windygates held up his head and looked about him, joined his fellows in their occupations and diversions, and was so disengaged from his miserable self-engrossment that he became foremost in their ranks once more. Above all he followed Maisie Hunter up and down, doubtless with the conviction that she had been his deliverer. He entered into serious discussions with her, in which he found no fault with Maisie's wits outstepping his, for was not that the established custom, where men and women were concerned, on the Deerwater? He gave way to the force of the reaction in himself, and waxed wild in the gaiety with which he jested and laughed, danced and sang, with her. As he had promised himself long ago, he forced her, in spite of her high spirit, into a corner metaphorically, compelled her hazel eyes to fall before his blue ones, and her small fingers to tremble in his strong grasp.

Nobody took it upon him or her to speak to young Windygates of his release from bondage, but everybody saw and felt that he was a free man again. And nobody, not the mother who bore him, rejoiced over his rescue as Maisie Hunter rejoiced, for was it not she who had won him from the darkness and its evil spirits, and restored him to the light with its blessed angels of work and duty and all lawful delights? Had she not foiled his foes, whoever and whatever they might be? Was she not entitled to rejoice over him, as the true doctor and true nurse thank God and are happy over the sick man whom they have been permitted to pluck from the grave's mouth, and bring back to life and health—as poor Madame St. Barbe's substitute for a heart had softened to Allan after she had helped to pull him through his fever?

Much as Lady Windygates was pleased and elated by the turn events had taken, and the triumphant success of her last plan, she was puzzled too, and appealed to Braehead, of all people, to clear up her perplexity. He had come over to Windygates one afternoon, and was contemplating with philosophical satisfaction young Windygates and Maisie Hunter, too busy to give up their important

work in order to attend to him. For were they not preparing turnip lanterns and false faces for the ploughboy to figure in at the New Year, and a guisard's dress, which Allan himself was to wear in a grand mask of guisards that was to be performed in every country house on the Water? The ancient Morrice dancers have survived after a fashion, and left more relics of their existence in austere Scotland than the carol singers or the waits, whom the Kirk did not countenance. Finally, the pair were writing out invitations to the dance or ball which Windygates was to give to the electrified neighbourhood, on which, and on its gossips, the tables were being turned.

'Yes, Braehead, it is well to have a young lady in the house to relieve the mistress of some of its lighter cares,' said Lady Windygates discreetly. 'It is about as good as having a daughter of my own,' she added, with a demure smile curving the straight line of her lips. 'It is lightsome for young Windygates and all of us. We appear to have got over our difficulties, and 'deed it was high time. Between you and me, I believe we're well rid at last of that fashous French madam. But can you tell me—you who have a long head of your own, and are steeped in book-learning—how the mere sight of my cousin Maisie Hunter has feared the other creature and caused her to take flight across the seas, or back to her own place in the spirit world, wherever that may be; I'm sure I'm easy where it is, if she is gone from us. But about the effect the coming of Maisie Hunter has had upon the other, I cannot rightly account for it, though it was me, I am glad to say, who sent for my cousin, and you may be sure I hoped she would be some good, or I would not have risked bringing her here. Still I would not have dared to reckon on the experiment prospering as swiftly, and to the extent to which it has prospered. No, Maisie is a fine lass, a very fine lass—you may remember I have always said so—but she is not so good as that comes to, that she should have power, after all that has been tried and has failed,' admitted Lady Windygates, with just a shade of mortification, 'by the mere look of her, to rout the Devil from his throne, as I was tempted to think our house here had grown. Can your worldly wisdom, which may have something to do with the black art, for anything I can tell, since you're proud to proclaim (oh, you deluded, conceited auld fule, Robbie Wedderburn!) that it and you have nothing to do with anything good—well, can you throw any light upon the ferlie?'

‘None, madam,’ said Braehead, as good-naturedly as if she had been paying him the highest compliments, ‘unless that, having been correct, as I apprehend you were, in your assumption that Allan was the young lady’s property from the beginning, the real owner having come on the scene, the usurper has withdrawn her claim with what I must call a commendable sense of civility and justice. It may be that there are rudimentary moral laws fulfilled by these *lusus naturæ*.’

‘Hout! away, away with your *naturæ*!’ cried Lady Windygates, with a fine vein of disdain; ‘when you take to them, there is no more good to be got out of you.’

(*To be continued.*)

